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MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY OF A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

AN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

by

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ABSTRACT

The present project uses the organization development perspective to improve the management's efficiency and effectiveness of a religious organization. Action research model was utilized as the primary methodology and approach for consultation. In the course of diagnosis, two data feedback cycles of nine phases were processed.

The client organization is a religious denomination in Hong Kong which consists of sixteen local churches, thirteen primary and secondary schools, fourteen social services facilities. Upon invitation of the management, the author, being an external consultant, collaborated with the management in examining the problems faced by the organization.

In the first data feedback cycle, six problems areas including structural and human resource problems were surfaced. Since the management decided to put human resource problems aside for the time being, the second data feedback cycle was focused on diagnosing the organization structure, the reporting relationships, and the decision-making process.

Diagnostic analysis and recommendations were given by the consultant. Information was fed back to the management and the group started to work on the data and develop solutions and action plans that fit the organization. While the management continued to work on the data, the scope and purpose of this project was achieved and completed successfully.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The world in which an organization operates is continuously in change and the change in the last decade is faster than before. Relationships among nations, institutions and organizations have changed, work values and norms have changed, and old technologies have been replaced by new ones. These forces affect both private and public sectors, for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. Certainly, there are internal factors such as strategies and goals, leadership and culture, and financial and human resources that affect an organization's effectiveness. These factors affect the organization's ability to interact with its environment and respond to the environmental changes timely and appropriately.

In order to secure the best possible external responsiveness and internal effectiveness, organizations must be examined periodically to identify strengths and detect possible deficiencies and opportunities. This is especially important for organizations that have already manifested symptoms of problems. Even though organization members have perceived the problems, day-to-day management practices such as planning, staffing, and controlling may not be sufficient to identify, diagnose, and correct them. Therefore in-depth examination conducted by external agent is needed to help organization enhance its capabilities to meet external and internal challenges.

I. Purpose of Study

The present study aims to use an organization development perspective to assist an organization in improving its effectiveness and efficiency to meet both internal and external challenges.

By organization development perspective we mean putting our emphases on organizational processes, content and the management of the culture of the system. In other words, we will consider how work is done and what the people who carry out the work believe and feel about their efficiency and effectiveness (Burke, 1987). A definition of organization development provided by Beckhard (1969) will help to clarify our focus of study. He stated that organization development is an effort (1) planned, (2) organization-wide, and (3) managed from the top, to (4) increase organization effectiveness and health through (5) planned interventions in the organization's "processes", using behavioral-science knowledge (Beckhard, 1969).

Therefore, the author, being an external consultant, attempted to apply organization development perspective and technique to 1) identify the problems of an organization by examining different internal organizational processes and related resources; and 2) work with organization members to find out possible ways to correct the problems.

II. The Client Organization

A. A Brief Description

The client organization is the Methodist Church, Hong Kong (hereafter abbreviated as MCHK)--a religious institution. It is classified as a not-for-profit service organization.

The MCHK is a major denomination of the Protestant Church in Hong Kong. It was founded in 1975 by the merger of the British-affiliated "The Chinese Methodist Church, Hong Kong District (Tsun To

Kung Woi)" (founded in 1884) and the American-affiliated "The Methodist Church, Hong Kong (Wei Lei Kung Hui)" (founded in 1953).

Currently, the MCHK has 16 local churches and 2 chapels. As at the end of 1992, total registered members reached 9,327 whereas regular or active participants (including non-registered attendants) amounted to 3,584. In addition to churches, MCHK operates 22 schools (6 high schools, 7 primary schools, and 9 kindergartens), 6 social service centres, 2 dental clinics, 2 nurseries, 4 camp sites, and 1 bookroom.

With respect to organization structure, the Conference is the highest governing body which comprises a Ministerial Session and a Representative Session. Members of Ministerial Session are full-time pastoral workers and Representative Sessions lay members. The annual general meeting of the Conference is merely a consulting and rubber-stamping meeting. When the Conference is not in session, the Standing Committee will carry out duties and exercise the power of the Conference. When the Standing Committee is not in session, the Executives' Meeting will administer all affairs of the church. Day-to-day operations are vested with the Conference office.

The MCHK champions the concept of threefold ministry--ministering, education, and social service--being three integrative components of MCHK's development strategy, with ministering leading the other two. A variety of committees works under the Conference. Most of the committees are grouped under three divisions, namely, Missions and Pastoral Care Division, School Education Division, and Social Services Division. The functioning of these three divisions is a concrete expression of the threefold ministry concept. The MCHK also highlights the democratic spirit which is manifested in the form of extensive laity participation in collective decision-making process.

B. The Need and Reason for Consultation

During the last ten years, number of operations increased from 45 in 1982 to 56 in 1992, but staff force has not seen proportionate increase (30 in 1983 and 32 in 1993). Also, size of congregation almost remains unchanged. Sunday service attendants and communion participants represent a more active group of members. The figures showed that these two types of participants slightly decreased in the past decade.

Table 1. Size of Congregation in 1982 and 1992

	1982	1992	% Change
Registered members	8,658	9,327	+7.7%
Sunday Service attendants	3,614	3,584	-0.8%
Communion participants	3,026	2,998	-0.9%

The top management of the organization was aware of the fact that the size of operation outgrew the size of workers and participants. The size of congregation was too big for the present staff force to handle and operate. Also, the management was frustrated by the deficit of the Conference during the last several years. Coupled with other issues, the management agreed that something had to be done in order to correct the situation.

C. The Commitment of the Management Team

The top management team was aware of the different problems and their symptoms. They felt that an in-depth evaluation of the present organizational functioning was indispensable and would be helpful in planning strategies in the future. They agreed that an outside body

would be suitable in conducting this study. The management expected that the external consultant would bring in knowledge and insights that help diagnose and improve the situation. Therefore the consultant was contacted and commissioned the task of conducting an organization study. The initiation and commitment of the management team was important in this consultation because the active involvement of and support from the top management was essential to deriving optimal success of the consultation.

III. Organization of Chapters

This study consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction that outlines our purpose of study and some basic information about the client organization.

Chapter 2 presents the methodology of study. Action research model and data feedback method are used in the consultation. A modification of the action research model is proposed. This chapter also presents the scope and approach of consultation.

Chapter 3 gives a brief description of the background, structure and different functioning of the client organization.

Chapter 4, 5, 6, and 7 present nine consultation phases. Chapter 4 consists of the entry and first data feedback cycle (phases 1 to 6). Chapter 5 and 6 present the diagnosis of the second feedback cycle (phases 7 to 8). Chapter 7 reports how diagnostic result is feedback to the management (phase 9).

Chapter 8 is a summary of the consultation. A conclusion is given in this last chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF CONSULTATION

I. Methodology

The present consultation is an organization development effort in improving the effectiveness of the client organization. Organization development is a discipline that applies theories from social and behavioral sciences to improve organizational processes. Although the term organization development has been used for decades, "explaining what organization development is and what people do who practice organizational development continues to be difficult because the field is still being shaped to some degree and because the practice of organizational development is more of a process than a step-by-step procedure" (Burke, 1987, p.1).

What would be generally agreed is that the focus of the field is primarily on managing the continual adaptation of internal organizational arrangements to changes in the external environment (Beer and Walton, 1987). Of the different understandings of term, French and Bell's (1984) interpretation of organization development helps us to identify the methodology used and define the scope of consultation.

Organization development is a top-management-supported, long-range effort to improve an organization's problem-solving and renewal processes, particularly through a more effective and collaborative diagnosis and management of organization culture--with special emphasis on formal work team, temporary team, and intergroup culture--with the assistance of a consultant-facilitator and the use of the theory and technology of applied behavioral science, including action research. (French & Bell, 1984, p. 17)

A. Action Research

The methodological model for this study is action research which is the most generally used methodology in organization development. French and Bell (1984) suggests that the origin of action research may be traced back to two independent sources. John Collier emphasized that an effective change requires research directed to practical problems and the joint effort of researcher, practitioner and client is indispensable. Kurt Lewin, on the other hand, advocated the concept of learning by doing; in other words, experimentation and implementation are closely linked.

In the last several decades, streams and uses of action research have undergone much changes and development. For the use of this consultation, action research is defined as:

The application of the scientific method of fact-finding and experimentation to practical problems requiring action solutions and involving the collaboration and cooperation of scientists, practitioners, and laypersons. The desired outcomes of the action research approach are solutions to the immediate problems and a contribution to scientific knowledge and theory. (French & Bell, 1984, pp. 109-110)

The model refers to several features that are important to this consultation (Cummings and Huse, 1989).

1. In most cases, action research is problem-oriented.
2. It consists of two main components, i.e. research and action.
3. It emphasizes on collecting data prior to action planning and implementation.
4. It focuses on planned change.
5. It emphasizes that every interaction between the consultant and the organization constitutes an intervention that may affect the

organization.

6. It is a cyclical process.

Cummings and Huse (1989) listed eight main steps used in this model:

1. Problem identification: The management perceives that the organization has certain problems.
2. Consultation with a behavioral science expert: This is an initial contact between the consultant and the client. The two parties will assess each other and try to establish a working relation.
3. Data gathering and preliminary diagnosis: There are four basic methods of gathering data, i.e. interviews, process observation, questionnaires, and organizational performance data. This stage is usually completed by the consultant, often in conjunction with organizational members.
4. Feedback to key client and group: Reporting back to those from whom the data were obtained on the collective sense of the organization problems.
5. Joint diagnosis of problem: Discuss what the data mean and planning the steps that should be taken as a consequence.
6. Joint action planning: The consultant and the management team jointly agree on further actions to be taken.
7. Action: Taking those steps. This stage involves the actual change from one organizational state to another.
8. Data gathering after action: To measure the effects of the action and to feed the results back to the organization which leads to rediagnosis and new action.

French adapted the model in the following format (French, 1969)

that we find most relevant to the present consultation:

Key executive perception of problems → consultation with behavioral scientist consultant →

data gathering and diagnosis by consultant → further data gathering → feedback to key client → joint action planning (objectives of OD program and means of attaining goals, e.g., team-building) →

data gathering → feedback to client group (e.g., in team building sessions, summary feedback by consultant; elaboration by group) → discussion and work on data by client group (new attitudes, new perspectives emerge) → action planning (determination of objectives and how to get there) → action (new behavior) →

data gathering (reassessment of state of the system) → feedback → discussion and work on feedback and emerging data → action planning → action → etc.

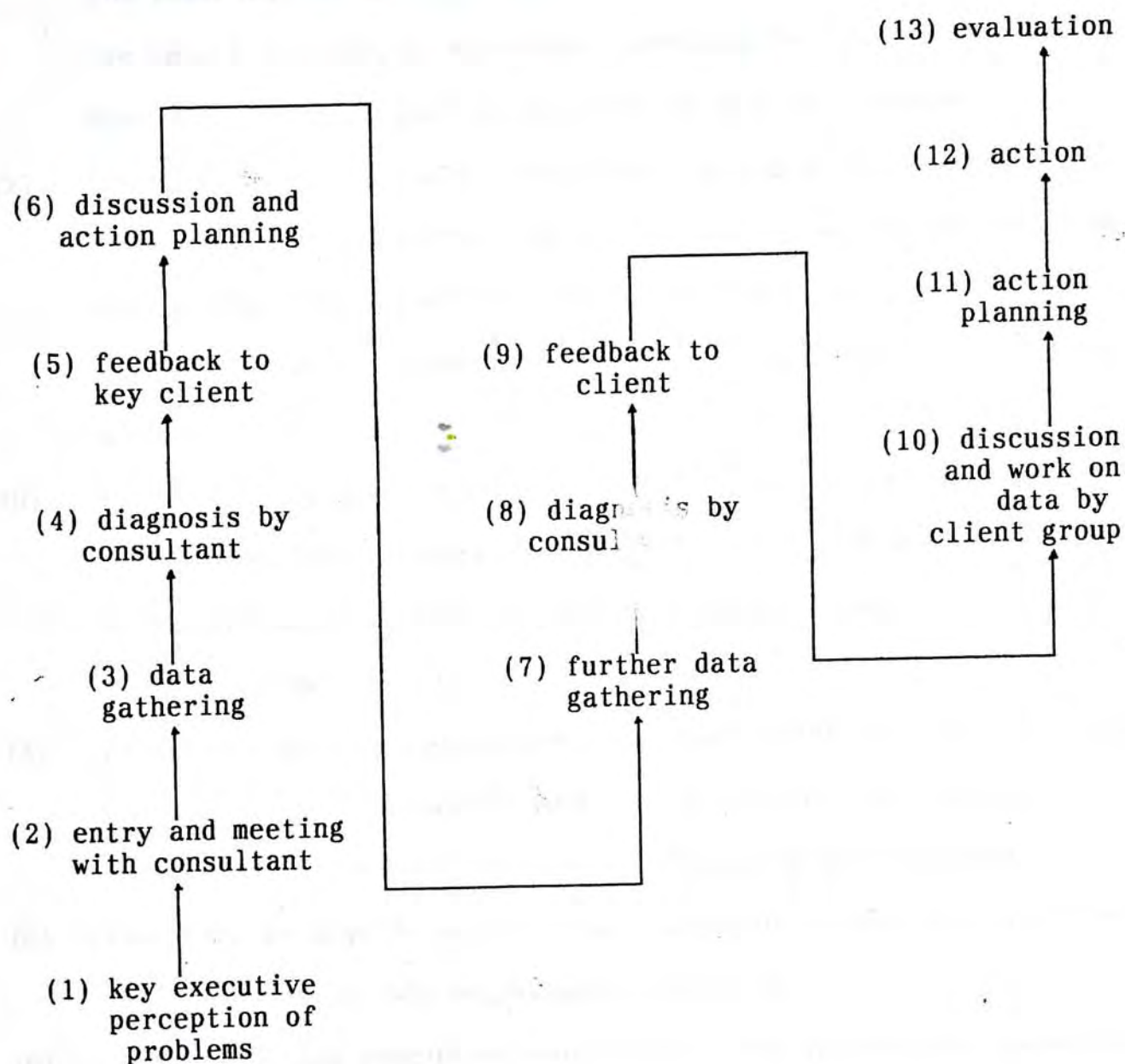
In the present study we basically used the model provided by French but further modified the model into 13 phases to fit the domain of consultation (see Figure 1).

(1) Key executive perception of problems → (2) entry and meeting with consultant → (3) data gathering → (4) diagnosis by consultant → (5) feedback to key client → (6) discussion →

(7) further data gathering → (8) diagnosis by consultant → (9) feedback to client →

(10) discussion and work on data by client group → (11) action planning → (12) action → (13) evaluation

Figure 1. Modified Action Research Model



The different phases of consultation are described as below.

- (1) Key executive perception of problems: The initiation of consultation should be originated within the organization, from the management. The need felt by the management for consultation is essential for the smooth running of diagnostic work and for the commitment to implement change which is the ultimate goal of consultation.
- (2) Entry and meeting with consultant: Acquaint key organization members with consultant helps to build an initial working relationship. This would be a chance for both parties to exchange expectations and estimate the possibility of entering a consultation contract.
- (3) Data gathering: According to the problems and concerns expressed by the organization members, basic data are collected and analyzed by the consultant. Data collection at this stage would be in a more general sense.
- (4) Diagnosis by the consultant: The consultant will review and analyze the data collected and try to identify the possible key issues critical to the effective functioning of the organization.
- (5) Feedback to key client: The consultant will present the result of data collected to key organization members.
- (6) Discussion: The consultant will discuss with organization members the result of data analysis. Some adjustment of interpretation is expected. The goal of discussion is to verify the survey result and to ascertain the key issues. Areas for further data collection and study will be selected. Scope of further diagnosis will be defined.
- (7) Further data gathering: More focused data collection work will be undertaken. This would involve some in-depth analysis.

- (8) **Diagnosis by consultant:** The consultant will review, categorize and analyze the collected data. The analysis will be focused on certain areas.
- (9) **Feedback to client:** Consultant will share data and interpretations with organization members.
- (10) **Discussion and work on data by client group:** Consultant will discuss with organization members the implications of data. Possible solutions to the problems will be suggested and examined.
- (11) **Action planning:** The consultant will work with organization members to explore ways of resolving the problems. The organization members (or in collaboration with the consultant) will use the data to formulate strategies or action plans to redirect the organization towards the desired state.
- (12) **Action:** The organization will carry out the plans. This phase sees the actual execution of action plans by the appropriate organizational units.
- (13) **Evaluation:** Data should be reexamined to evaluate the effectiveness of diagnosis.

B. Data Feedback Cycles

More specifically, two data feedback cycles, were employed in the present consultation. Data feedback involves three types of activities (Nadler, 1977): (1) systematic data collection: data collected through questionnaires, interviews, observation or examination of organization records; (2) data analysis: the consultant will work with the data, either alone or in collaboration with members of the organization, to aggregate, analyze, or interpret it; and (3) data feedback: the consultant will give the data back to organization members in a form in which they can make use of it. Another objective of data feedback is to obtain a reasonable

consensus on the facts and a shared way of thinking about these facts. This process can lead to adjustment of analysis result.

According to our adapted action research model, two data feedback cycles were used, one for preliminary data collection and the other for more in-depth data collection and analysis.

C. Advantages for Choosing Action Research and Data Feedback Cycles

There are three advantages for using action research model and data feedback method in the present consultation.

1. The consultant is an outsider of the organization. In the end it would be the organization members who implement the changes. Their participation in the process of consultation will help them identify with the result of diagnosis and the decision of change direction.
2. The consultant can focus and react accurately to the need of the organization by informing to and discussing with organization members the data collected at all stages.
3. The action research model and data feedback method foster trust and honest sharing of information because organization members will participate in the process.

II. Scope of Consultation

Although the whole consultation process will not be complete until action for change is taken by organization members, the present study only covered two data feedback cycles. In other words, phases 10 to 13 (discussion and work on result by client group, action planning, implementation, and evaluation) will not be reported in this work. The purpose of this report as an academic exercise on organization development is to utilize two different data feedback methods to bring

into light the problems faced by the MCHK and work together with management of the MCHK to seek for solutions to make the organization more effective and viable. So the action stage which require longer time to implement and effect the changes will not be covered in this report. Nevertheless, guidelines on how to implement the changes would be suggested and recorded in this report. Also, the consultant will continue the diagnostic work and see to the completion of the consultation if asked by MCHK. But result from phases 10 till 13, i.e. discussion and work on result by client group, action planning, implementation and evaluation are not included in this report.

The consultation is remedial oriented. Since the organization has manifested symptoms of problems, the consultant will work with organization members to find out what has gone wrong in the organization and to identify possible solutions. Therefore, the consultation will be issue-specific rather than comprehensive.

The scope of consultation will be confined to the present situation of the organization. The history of the organization since its founding through the present is not the focus of the present study. Detailed historical analysis will not be provided in this work. Nevertheless, historical development and past events will be referred to when they are relevant. Basically the consultation will focus on the present situation and concerns itself with today and what needs to be done to strengthen the organization to meet new challenges.

Among churches, schools, and social service centres (representing ministering, education, and social service of the threefold ministry concept), churches are the focus of consultation. Although schools and centres also require significant resources and exert impact on the MCHK, churches constitute the main body of MCHK and would be the emphasis of the present study. Nevertheless, issues concerning schools and

centres will be discussed and referred to when they are related to church functioning.

III. Consultation Approaches

A. Participation of Organization Members

Action research model is not only the methodology used in this consultation, it can also be viewed as an approach to consultation. Organization members are expected to involve in the consultation process. It is assumed that organization members are professionally competent. The consultation process will heighten their awareness as to what is going on and what has gone wrong in the system. With the help of the consultant, organization members are expected to participate actively in identifying problems, generating solutions, making choices, and taking corrective actions. By means of this interactive approach, it is believed that organization members would more easily support what they have helped to create. This belief is congruent with the collaborative aspect of the action research model (French & Bell, 1984).

B. Role of Consultant

The consultant, as an organization development practitioner, is concerned with

... providing people with choices, so that their feelings of freedom will not be unduly curtailed and thus their resistance will be minimized, and involving people at some level of participative decision making and communication regarding the direction of organizational change, so that commitment to change implementation will be enhanced. (Burke, 1987, p. 79)

Therefore the consultant will not tell organization members what to do. The consultant's role in this work is an external facilitator who helps bringing to the surface the underlying problems and issues of the

organization. With the assistance of the consultant, solutions would be generated within the organization, but nevertheless, direction of change is left to the decision of organization members. The consultant is not to interject personal feelings into the situation. At times, recommendations and opinions will be provided but standard solutions will not be imposed upon the organization. Also, the consultant will help and work with the management to discuss the implications of the diagnosis, work out possible solutions and set priorities that best fit the organization. Even if it is the consultant who recommends solutions, it would be up to the management to adopt and implement them.

CHAPTER THREE

BACKGROUND OF MCHK

The MCHK is a not-for-profit organization, a religious institution which belongs to the service sector. It is a major denomination of the Protestant Church in Hong Kong and worldwide.

The structure and operation mode of MCHK mainly inherit from the tradition of Methodism. However, the church has experienced a series of changes in the past decades. Therefore the first part of the present chapter is devoted to a brief historical review of the MCHK. Then the rest of the chapter will concentrate on depicting the current situation of the church. Comprehensive analysis of the organization will not be given here.

Two key elements that are relevant to the diagnosis will be discussed, i.e. organization structure and organizational resources including human, financial, and physical resources.

I. A Brief History

The MCHK belongs to the tradition of Methodism. It was founded through the merger of two branches of Methodist in 1975. The unity of the British-affiliated "The Chinese Methodist Church, Hong Kong District (Tsun To Kung Wooi)" and the American-affiliated "The Methodist Church, Hong Kong (Wei Li Kung Hui)" gave birth to "The Methodist Church, Hong Kong". In 1983 the MCHK was incorporated. The Hong Kong English District of the Methodist Church, United Kingdom, united with the MCHK in 1988 and became the English Speaking Circuit.

Therefore the MCHK is a relatively young organization. But the history of the two branches could be traced back a hundred years (i.e. "Tsun To") and the MCHK celebrated her centenary in 1985.

The merger itself was by no means an easy task. The two branches had inherited different traditions and developed different strategies and modes of operation. Unavoidably there were tensions and uncertainties. After two decades, major conflicts and problems have been subsided. On the other hand, the MCHK has seen some benefits from amalgamation. For example, it was claimed that the church is strengthened, resources are better allocated, and the church is able to achieve the goal of self-supporting and self-governing.

II. Organization Structure

The organization of MCHK is governed by her Constitution and the By-laws which filed resolutions passed in different meetings.

The organization structure of the MCHK could be understood in three functions, i.e. decision-making, coordination, and execution. The organization chart designed by the management of the MCHK is shown in Figure 2 (p. 19).

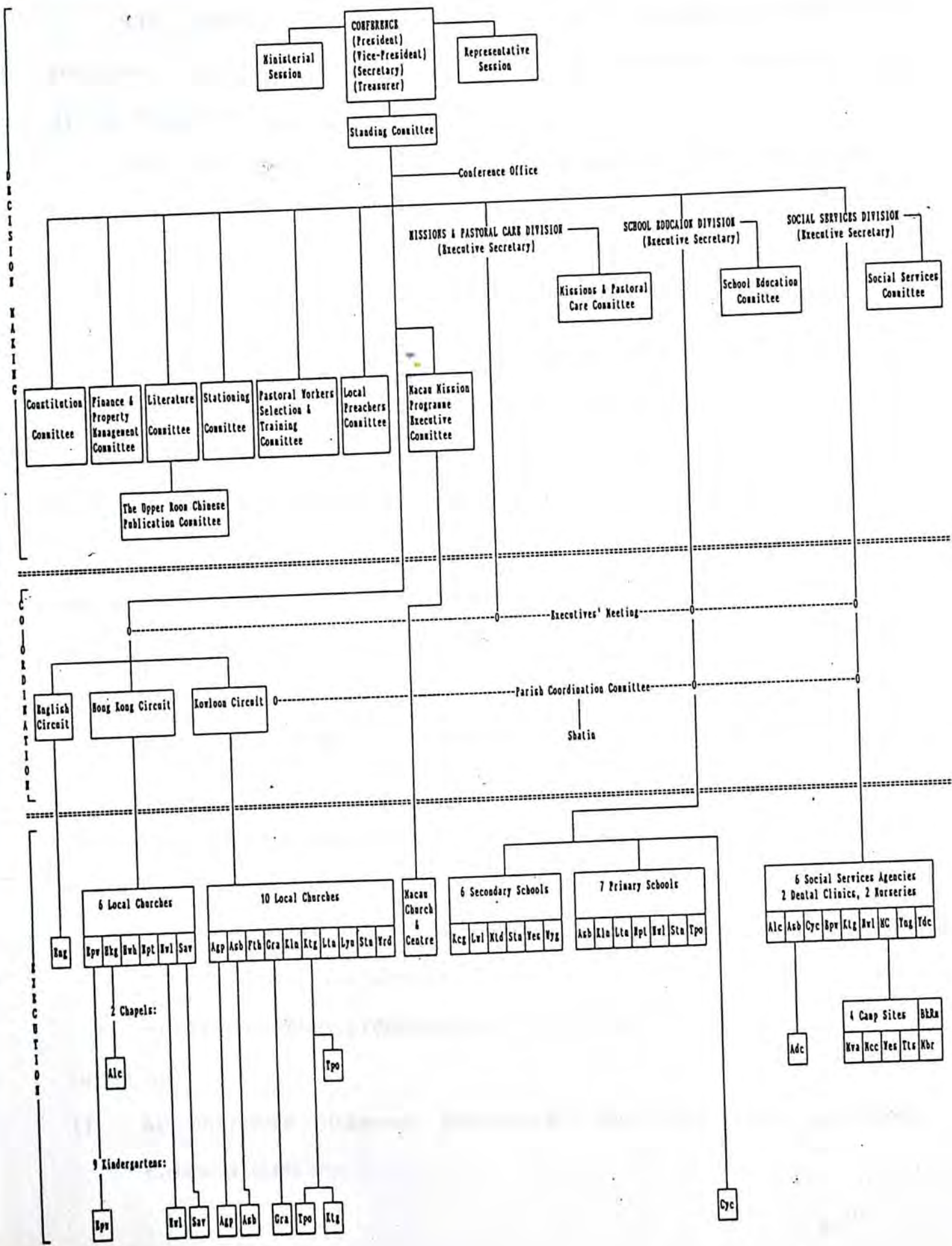
A. Decision-Making Function

The Conference which comprises the Representative and Ministerial Sessions is the highest decision-making body of the MCHK. Working under the Conference are the Standing Committee and various functional committees. These committees perform policy-making functions of the MCHK.

1. Conference

The Conference is the highest governing body with full

Figure 2. Organization Chart of the MCHK



responsibility of supervising and managing all subsidiaries and their works. It is also responsible for centralizing and re-allocating resources, stationing ministers, formulating and setting up long term development plan for the church.

The Conference Committee includes 1) the President (minister), 2) the Vice-President (lay representative), 3) the Secretary (minister); and 4) the Treasurer (lay representative).

The Conference consists of a Representative Session and a Ministerial Session.

a. Ministerial Session

The Ministerial Session of the Conference consists of all ministers and deacons, but deacons do not have the right to vote. The Session is vested with duties to "deal with all matters relating to the training, discipline and competence of deacons and ministers, and the candidates for deacons and ministers; and decide on ordination of deacons and ministers. However, the receiving of deacons and ministers into full connexion shall also be approved by the Representative Session" (Constitution, Section 20). Thus, the major function of this Ministerial Session is to handle all major manpower issues of ministerial workers.

At least one meeting should be convened each year. And in fact only one meeting was held in 1993 which was attended by 29 representatives and 1 observer.

b. Representative Session

Members of the Representative Session mainly include (Constitution, Order 16):

- 1) all ministers, deacons, missionaries and Conference appointed pastoral workers;

- 2) delegates from each local church: two lay members from each church, plus an additional one for each additional 200 members in the local church;
- 3) all members of the Standing Committee of the Conference; and
- 4) delegates from Conference committees: two from each committee.

The delegates constitute the corporate body of the MCHK. They meet annually to receive reports, motions, budget, and financial statements; and decide and approve matters relating to the church and the subsidiaries such as those concerning doctrine, policies, stationing, and Conference committee election.

The annual general meeting held in 1993 had 114 attendants.

2. Standing Committee

When the Conference is not in session, duties are vested with the Standing Committee which is mainly consisted of (Constitution Section 31):

- 1) 9 *ex-officio* members: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Superintendents of the Hong Kong and Kowloon Circuits, Executives of the Missions and Pastoral Care Division, School Education Division, and Social Services Division, the outgoing President and Vice-President of the Conference for the first year after their retirement from office;
- 2) 6 elected members from ministers, deacons, deacons-on-probation, and missionaries; and
- 3) 24 lay representatives from the two circuits, at least one from each local church.

It is estimated that eight meetings will be convened by the Standing Committee in 1994 to administer the affairs of the church.

When the Committee is not in session, duties are vested with the Executives' Meeting which functions are described in the latter session (B.1, p. 23).

3. Conference Office

Day-to-day operation is left to the Conference office which is headed by the Executive Secretary of the MCHK. The office is responsible for central administration and execution of policies. Although the Conference Office functions at the decision-making level, it is in fact a coordinating unit. Also, staff of the office are not voting members of the different sessions, committees, or meetings.

4. Conference Committees

The Conference functions through 10 committees which are set up upon recommendation of the Standing Committee and approval of the Representative Session of the Conference. Conference committees are responsible for carrying out the different functions of the MCHK. President, Vice-President and Secretary of Conference are *ex-officio* members of all committees.

Currently there are ten committees, three of which are organized as divisions each with a collection of sub-committees. These three divisions are the Missions and Pastoral Care Division, School Education Division and Social Services Division. They represent the threefold ministry concept of the MCHK.

These conference level committees could be viewed as functional units. School Education Division and Social Services Division supervise the subsidiary schools and centres respectively. Missions and Pastoral Care Division monitors and supervises ministerial and evangelistic work of local churches and chapels.

In line with the democratic spirit upheld by the MCHK, lay participation is emphasized and encouraged in committee functioning and laity usually constitutes the major body of a committee.

B. Coordinating Function

1. Executives' Meeting

The Executives' Meeting is the major coordinating unit in the MCHK. It consists of the nine *ex-officio* members of the standing committee and the Executive Secretary of the MCHK.

When the Standing Committee is not in session, duties are vested with the Executives' Meeting. According to the by-laws, the Executives' Meeting is not only a coordinating body, it also administers the operation of the church and takes charge of the administration of the Conference Office. The Executives' Meeting governs and is well informed of all aspects of church affairs. All important affairs are discussed and examined in the Meeting before submitting for formal approval of the Standing Committee or Representative Session. Therefore it is also capable of making operational decisions. The executives meet monthly and the Meeting is obviously the most frequently held meeting in both decision-making and coordinating levels.

2. Circuits

The role and function of Circuits have experienced much changes in the past decades. Today there are three Circuits, namely the Hong Kong Circuit which consists of 6 local churches, Kowloon Circuit which consists of 10 local churches, and the English Circuit which has only 1 local church. Circuit members include pastoral, retired pastoral, non-pastoral workers and lay representatives from the respective circuit which is led by a Circuit Superintendent.

The Circuit is basically a coordinating body between local churches and the Conference. Its major functions include overseeing progress of local churches and monitoring pastoral affairs.

3. Parish Coordination Committee

The Parish Coordination Committee is a rather new concept to strengthen the integration of ministry, education, and social service geographically. It aims to coordinate the three functions and plan for strategic development. This committee is to be established in districts where the three church functions are present. The first Parish Coordination Committee was set up in Shatin.

C. Execution Function

The front lines of the MCHK include local churches, chapels, meeting places, schools, and social services centres grouped under the three Divisions.

1. Local Churches

Currently there are 17 local churches grouped under three circuits. An exception is the Macau church and centre which is supervised directly by the Standing Committee.

Local churches are to perform basic church functions including recruiting new members, preaching and ministering. Local church adopts the self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting philosophy and functions as profit centres. Conference control is manifested in two aspects. First, an amount equivalent to 45% of three major offering items are to be forwarded to the Conference Office. Second, in return, local church ministers are remunerated and stationed by the Conference. Participation in central management is seen in lay members' attendance

in higher level meetings in the Conference hierarchy.

2. Chapels and Meeting Places

Chapels and Meeting Places are developed by and belonged to local churches. They have to meet some requirements within certain period of time in order to be established as a church. A local church would become a meeting place if it is unable to meet the basic requirement for a local church.

3. Schools and Centres

Presently the MCHK has 6 high schools, 7 primary schools, 9 kindergartens, 6 social service centres, 4 camp sites, 2 dental clinics, 2 nurseries, and 1 bookroom. While high schools, primary schools, clinics, nurseries, bookroom, and centres are under the supervision of School Education or Social Service Divisions, most kindergartens are governed by local churches.

D. Strategic Development Committee

In 1991 the Standing Committee set up the Strategic Development Committee to assess existing resources, to plan and formulate blueprint for future development. This ad hoc Committee consists of 10 members including 6 lay members and 4 pastoral workers. The chairman is a lay member. It appears that most findings and proposals of the Committee are accepted by the Conference and have exerted significant impact upon the church.

III. Organizational Resources

Organizational resources of the MCHK include human resources, financial resources and physical resources.

A. Human Resources

As a service organization which organizational process does not require machineries and plants, human assets is of great importance to the Church. Pastoral workers, non-pastoral workers and lay members are all significant resources of MCHK.

1. Pastoral Workers

Mainly there are two kinds of pastoral workers, those employed by the Conference and those employed by local churches. Ministers, deacons, and Conference preachers are employed and remunerated by the Conference whereas parish preachers are recruited and remunerated by the respective local church. As at July 1993 there were 32 pastoral workers including 10 ministers, 5 deacons, 2 Conference preachers and 15 parish preachers.

In general, pastoral workers are responsible for pastoral work and church administration. Ministers and deacons are ordained by the church and are subject to life long office. All ministers, deacons and Conference preachers are stationed by the Conference to work in different units.

2. Non-pastoral Workers

Basically non-pastoral workers are conceived as supportive to church functions. According to different job nature, non-pastoral workers perform executive, administrative, financial, clerical, and manual duties in the church. A local church might employ several clerical staff and janitors. Today, a significant group of non-pastoral workers is found in the Conference Office which is led by the Executive Secretary.

3. Lay Members

Lay members constitute the main body of the MCHK. A person becomes lay member through baptism, confirmation, or transfer. Lay member is affiliated to a local church but might transfer to another local church when moves from place to place.

Lay members are in fact registered members of the church and are entitled to partake in communion. Indeed they ought to attend Sunday Service, communion and other church activities. But some members do not always attend service or partake communion whereas some non-members are regular attendants.

a. Local Preachers

The local preachers are a selected group of lay members who are not ordained, have their own professions, but serve as ministers in their respective churches on a voluntary basis. Since local preachers have their own professions they are not expected to take up administrative work in the church.

B. Financial Resources

The major source of income for both Conference and local churches comes from offering. But all offerings are received by local churches. Each church would then forward to the Conference office 45% of the three major items of offering, namely, offertory, tithing, and thanksgiving. The operation of the Conference depends heavily on this 45% contribution from local churches.

Schools are subsidized by the government. Major financial resources of social service centres comes from subvention from the government and Community Chest. Schools and centres could also apply to designated funds of Conference for financial support.

C. Physical Resources

The major physical resources are real estates which are used for church worship and related activities, schools, centres, staff residence, camp sites, etc. The tenements are bought, rented or granted by Government.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONSULTATION PROCESS

PHASES ONE TO SIX

(1) Key executive perception of problems → (2) entry and meeting with consultant → (3) data gathering → (4) diagnosis by consultant → (5) feedback to key client → (6) discussion

These six phases represented the entry phase and the first cycle of data feedback in which general data were collected. The purpose of this cycle was to identify the key issues faced by the church. By the end of the cycle plans for in-depth diagnostic work or research areas were to be designed.

I. Key Executive Perception of Problems (Phase 1)

As presented in Chapter One, top management of MCHK was aware that both operation and functioning of the MCHK were inefficient and ineffective.

A. Task of the Strategic Development Committee

In 1991, the Standing Committee commissioned the setting up of the Strategic Development Committee, a special working committee, to formulate development blueprint for the church. Presently their assignment was to assess human and financial resources and give recommendations for future development. It was clear that the MCHK had destined to make the organization more effective and viable.

B. Problems Perceived by the Executives' Meeting

In July 1993 the Executives' Meeting held a one day conference to evaluate the present situation of the church. Eight key problems faced by the church were raised. These included:

1. quality of staff being unsatisfactory; the staff lacked discipline and on-the-job training;
2. insufficient coordination and mutual support;
3. present structure being unduly oversized when compared with the size of staff team;
4. relationships between Conference and local churches were remote, sometimes even hostile; conflicts mainly related to 1) stationing; and 2) offering contributed to Conference;
5. shortage of manpower, including pastoral and voluntary workers; people were not working for a common goal; morale was relatively low, which was afflicted by interpersonal conflicts and rumors;
6. laity lacked training and ministering; laity's quality declined, their knowledge about church work was meager;
7. offering contribution to the Conference was insufficient; and
8. too many activities, yet without focus or direction; quality being poor.

Three aspects, namely, human resources, financial management, and organization structure were noted as areas for improvement. Since then, efforts had been made to correct the problems. For example, the MCHK restructured the Mission and Pastoral Care Division, attempting to flatten the structure. In fact, for the last two years, the Strategic Development Committee had been working on human and financial resources assessment project.

What seemed to be left unexamined was the organization structure. The management agreed that in view of the tight manpower, it would be

beneficial to invite external consultant to study the MCHK structure and give recommendations.

II. Entry and Meeting with Consultant (Phase 2)

A. The First Meeting

The consultant was then invited to an initial meeting with members of the Executives' Meeting. The Executive Secretary of the Conference office and two pastors attended the meeting. The chairman of the Executives' Meeting (also chairman of the Conference) was not present. But other members of the committee assured the consultant full support of the Meeting to this project.

The purpose of the meeting was to explore the issues concerned by the top management team. Also, it was a chance for both parties to explore the possibility of building a trusting working relationship, and to communicate the expectation of the extent of investigation.

During the meeting, members of the Executives' Meeting explained to the consultant about the organization structure and they also expressed their views concerning the present situation of the church. They commented that the structure was too complicated, there were too many committees and meetings, but the operation was not as efficient as it should be. They expected the consultant to conduct a thorough evaluation of the church structure and operation, and give suggestions for improvement.

They said that the Meeting would not set a scope or boundary for investigation. Not even time limit was assigned. But they welcomed any in-depth study that would lead to change and improvement. In addition, they assured the consultant of her accessibility to any information or document needed.

Formal contract was not signed. But an understanding was reached

by both parties that an investigation was to be started soon and the church was supportive of the project.

The Executives' Meeting had shown their support and commitment in the study. This would facilitate the smoothness of the ongoing work and procedures.

Since the committee was unable to identify a specific study area except that the structure itself would be one major concern, an exploratory study was in need to identify the key issues.

Concerning the working relationship, the consultation was initiated by the Executives' Meeting and the consultant was to report to the Meeting progress and result of consultation.

B. The Annual Representative Meeting

Before the consultant started collecting data, the consultant was invited to attend the annual general meeting of the Representative Session of Conference as an observer. There were about 200 attendants including representatives, guests, and observers. The chairman of the MCHK delivered his annual report in which he specifically mentioned the undertaking of a management study by the consultant. He took the opportunity to convince the representatives that deficiencies and weaknesses of the church were to be dealt with. The church was destined and committed to improve the operation and structure in the near future. The consultant was introduced to the attendants.

III. Data Collection (Phase 3)

A. Methodology

After the initial meeting and the annual representative meeting, it was decided that an exploratory questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews would be conducted. So, data collection method for this cycle

was a combination of interviews and survey feedback. In fact, survey feedback is a commonly used action research data collection method.

The survey and interview aimed to collect opinions from top management concerning the current situation of MCHK. The purpose was to grasp a brief picture of how the management believed and felt about MCHK, i.e. its strengths and weaknesses, problems and crises. It was expected that by means of questionnaire and interview, the major concerns and key problem areas as perceived by the top management could be gathered. Also, it was expected that by answering the questions, the management might be stirred up and thought more about the problems that they had been aware and unaware of before.

Therefore questionnaires were sent to the respondents before follow-up interviews were conducted. It was expected that the open-ended questions would orient the respondents towards the prevalent issues faced by the MCHK. After completed questionnaires were collected, the consultant would be able to understand the general feeling and perception of the management towards the MCHK and its functioning. Follow-up interviews would be conducted to clarify data and probe other problems that were not identified in the questionnaire.

The first data feedback cycle only involved the top management. It was assumed that the top management would think more about the problems and issues of the church than other members and these problems would relate more to them than to other members. The top management was defined as members of the Executives' Meetings and pastors in charge of local churches.

B. Data Collection

A proposal and schedule of the first data feedback cycle was submitted to the Executives' Meeting outlining the objective, plan and

schedule of the survey. The proposal was received and approved by the Meeting.

An open-ended questionnaire of four questions in Chinese was designed. The questionnaire had two pages. Each question had almost half page for answering. Respondents were asked to express their opinions about the MCHK. Specifically they were asked to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the following areas:

1. church structure;
2. management of the conference;
3. relationships between Conference and local churches; and
4. relationships among local churches.

Twenty questionnaires were sent to (1) 16 pastors in charge of local churches and (2) 4 members in the Executives' Meeting. (The Meeting has 11 members, 7 being pastors in charge of local churches). A covering letter was attached to each questionnaire explaining the purpose of the survey and assuring strict confidentiality of information. Respondents were requested to return the questionnaires within two weeks.

By the deadline, only six questionnaires were received. The response rate was 30%. The consultant was then invited to attend a monthly meeting for pastors. In the meeting, the consultant explained to the attendants the purpose of survey and encourage those who received the questionnaire to complete and return it as soon as possible. Eventually five more questionnaires were collected. Totally eleven questionnaires were returned. Five questionnaires came from the Executives' Meeting (2 non-pastoral members and 3 ministers) and six questionnaires came from ministers of local churches. The response rate was 57.9%.

In order to inquire into the issues mentioned by the respondents,

follow-up interviews were arranged for each respondent. The purpose of the interview was to:

1. Clarify and elaborate the points mentioned by the respondents;
2. Explore the causes and links of different issues; and
2. Explore other related issues not mentioned in the questionnaire.

It was disclosed to the consultant during the interviews that there was a Strategic Development Committee, which was set up by the Standing Committee, conducting surveys to evaluate the present situation of MCHK. It seemed that there were similarities and perhaps overlapping between the work of the Committee and this consultation project. Therefore two interviews were arranged for the chairman and one other member of the Committee to understand the Committee's objectives, progress, plan and their diagnosis of the present situation of MCHK.

C. Survey and Interview Results

Totally fourteen interviews were conducted. The interviewees consisted of 5 members from the Executives' Meeting (4 pastoral workers and 1 non-pastoral worker), 7 pastoral workers in charge of local churches, and 2 members from the Strategic Development Committee (1 being Chairman of the Committee). Each interview last about one hour and a half.

The opinions collected from the questionnaires and individual interviews represented an evaluation of MCHK by its top/senior management team. This was a subjective or projective evaluation. It could be argued that the actual situation of MCHK was different from what was reported, but this was by no means irrelevant because how the management subjectively perceived their work and their organization was most important in this consultation. Their opinions covered the following areas:

1. organization structure;
2. human resources;
3. relationships between Conference and local churches;
4. management of the Conference; and
5. relationships among local churches.

1. Organization Structure

In general the respondents agreed that the church structure was highly organized and they attributed it to the spirit of Methodism. Respondents generally agreed that order, fairness and democracy were the core values and the strength of MCHK.

It was the tradition of MCHK to follow rules and procedures with careful attention to details. This resulted in a highly centralized system that controlled finance, personnel, development and administration of the MCHK. On the positive side, it enabled the management to monitor the system closely and safeguard that there would be no loopholes. The respondents agreed that this orientation minimized favoritism. The general feeling was that major faults would not be found in this system. Most respondents admitted that the centralization of resources was necessary for effective expansion and development of new operations.

On the other hand, some respondents observed that this orientation had some drawbacks. It was time consuming and it lacked flexibility. More importantly, in order to uphold the core values, layers of management and committees were generated. Decision-making process became ineffective and inefficient. Also, information flow was slow and sometimes delayed. They suggested that the structure should be simplified.

Many respondents felt that they had fallen in a struggle between attending to Conference's affairs and their own church's affairs. Some

respondents even remarked that MCHK needed to invest huge financial resources to operate and maintain the system. The financial difficulty of the Conference surfaced in recent years was a consequence of this orientation.

a. Meetings

Most respondents complained that there were too many meetings. These meetings were the result of layers of hierarchy and committees. Since these meetings mainly handled administrative affairs so they drained the pastors of their energy and time. The respondents claimed that their primary task was to manage local churches or units for which they were responsible. But now they were required to attend different Conference meetings which made their primary task become a minor one. This accounted for the declining quality of laity and local churches. The respondents claimed that they had to leave the responsibility of ministry to the hands of parish workers. The respondents considered this a vicious cycle. In order to improve the quality of church units, the pastors had to be freed from administrative burdens.

However, a few respondents contended that it was only a misperception of the real situation. They claimed that most pastors were not overburdened with meetings. Only two to three pastors of the core management team were overburdened. Other pastors were only projecting or even exaggerating the situation.

b. Decision-Making Process

There was also complaint about repetition of procedures. Some respondents said that one had to go through various meetings and procedures to gain an approval. For example, if a church member intended to study in a seminary, he had to go through six to seven

meetings/committees to get an approval and endorsement. The respondents felt that ministerial appointment was life long. The different layers could help the management secure a right decision, especially if it was an irrevocable one.

However, they criticized that in fact a lower level committee would pay little attention to an application, assuming that another committee would look into the matter in greater details. But when the application passed to a higher level, committee members felt that it had already gained approval from lower levels, it seemed unjustifiable to reject the approval. Also, being rest assured that other committees had carefully studied the case this committee again would not pay painstaking effort in examining the application. In reality, this vicious cycle resulted in different forms of management loopholes which made the decision making process ineffective and inefficient.

Some respondents noted that when there were several pastoral workers sitting in one committee the role and responsibility of each member were unclear. Often one person relied on another to put more effort in the meeting. The consequence was that no one was actually concentrating on the matters discussed.

The majority of respondents suggested that the organization structure should be simplified in order to have a smooth and efficient decision-making process. There should be fewer committees and fewer meetings. Authority should be decentralized. The present structure was seen as a waste of time, manpower, and resources.

Concerning the decentralization of authority, several respondents feared that the present staff team was still not mature enough to make important decisions. Some even doubted the quality of the staff and suspected that the system would be uncontrollable once authority was

decentralized. (Refer to latter sections for further discussion on human resources, pp. 41-45)

c. Standing Committee and Laity Representatives

Many respondents pointed out that the committee structure represented the democratic spirit of MCHK. Laity participation was central to MCHK. Some suggested that laity participation should be further encouraged.

However, other respondents thought that the Standing Committee lacked in representation although two thirds of the members came from local churches. The election process had become routine and representatives elected often spoke for their own interests. The delegates looked for power sharing rather than participation and contribution. Some respondents also felt that the present committee already had too many members. Discussions were unduly prolonged yet unable to focus on the key issues.

A few respondents remarked that the ratio of laity in the Standing Committee was unnecessarily high. Having too many members in a committee made discussion time consuming and ineffective. It was suggested that number of laity representatives should be reduced so that a balance between laity and staff could be reached. However, some respondents felt that any attempt to curtail lay members' participation in the Standing Committee would incite unrest and objection because being a member of the Standing Committee seemed to have a higher status in the church.

d. Balance of Preaching, Social Services, and Education

Most respondents saw the threefold ministry of preaching, service and education being the mission of MCHK. However, they remarked that

in recent years it became difficult to keep a good balance of these three pillars. They felt that the quality of each of the three units could hardly be maintained. Some even noted that if a church performed all three functions, inevitably preaching would become secondary.

They doubted the linkage between concept and reality. If the staff lacked either gift, interest, or experience, it would be difficult for him to lead and coordinate all three functions. Putting the three functions together should enable better allocation of resources. Instead, conflict arose (especially about the use of premises).

e. The Circuits

Some respondents felt that the present circuit system was not functioning at all. The circuit was unable to supervise, monitor, and control the works of local churches. The two meetings held each year were routines. A general feeling was that the circuits were one management layer that could be cut. With respect to the role of the superintendents, opinions were diverse. Some felt that the post should be canceled yet some felt that superintendents could perform the role of counselor and trainer to younger pastoral workers.

f. Role of the Conference

Many respondents thought that the central management lacked direction. Therefore works and activities were without focus.

Some thought that the role of the Conference was ambiguous. Several respondents felt that the role of the central management should be supportive rather than controlling. Local churches should be granted greater autonomy.

g. Chairman of Conference

There were diverse opinions concerning whether the chairmanship should be a full time position. Some respondents felt that it should be a full time post, otherwise the chairman would not be able to concentrate on leading MCHK. Other respondents felt the opposite and claimed that the present staff resources did not allow extra personnel to take up a full time post.

h. Summary

The tight and centralized system was noted as one distinguished feature of the MCHK. Some respondents commented that the system lacked flexibility and efficiency. There were numerous meetings but decision-making process was slow and ineffective. Laity participation further complicated the situation. Some respondents suggested that meetings and layers of hierarchy should be reduced to streamline the structure.

Some other comments revolved around a more macro aspect. Some criticized the practicality of the threefold ministry concept while others commented on the leading role of the Conference.

2. Human Resources

In general, respondents supported the present system that workers were under direct supervision of the Conference. Under the existing system, pastoral workers could be recruited by Conference or by local churches. All respondents were recruited by Conference and the majority supported the system and admitted that there were advantages of this system. It provided job security because 1) once they were recruited, it would be a life-long employment, and 2) being Conference staff, they were not subject to the scrutiny of the individual church

units and the laity.

Some problems concerning human resources management were noted by the respondents. These included workload, recruitment, stationing, staff benefit and support.

a. Understaffing and Workload

Almost all respondents remarked that the church was seriously understaffed. It follows that many respondents complained about the heavy workload. Some respondents also remarked that when the Conference assigned responsibilities, little consideration was given to individual differences such as ability and interest. Not all workers were competent in performing administrative, educational, and social service functions. Individual strengths and weaknesses were not considered. Some respondents considered ministering to the congregation their priority but they were unable to perform the job effectively because they had exhausted themselves meeting different demands. They revealed that when exhausted, many pastoral workers would seek different ways to leave the post. Very often, taking a leave for further study was a convenient excuse.

However, some respondents noted that the workload was unevenly distributed among workers. Some pastors were overloaded while others had little to do. Several respondents noted that there was redundancy in the Conference office.

b. Stationing

Another issue concerned the stationing of staff. Some respondents felt that the present stationing system lacked flexibility. Stationing had long been the cause of complaints and grievances from both staff and local churches.

Some argued that the Conference had tried its best to allocate resources to all units. But other respondents felt that some units were ill-treated and their interests were sacrificed for the benefits of larger churches.

Some respondents remarked that the stationing system plus the Conference recruitment system led to a situation that staff might refrain from resolving problems and conflicts in a local church. They simply requested for a transfer to another church.

c. Recruitment

Some respondents remarked that the MCHK was unable to recruit qualified workers. The management noted that performance of some workers was unsatisfactory. Since pastoral workers were front line workers to minister and guide the congregation, their performance would directly affect the quality of the local church and congregation. Therefore some members of the management expressed that they felt uncomfortable to decentralize the authority. It resulted in a phenomenon that committees were attended by many pastoral workers to ensure that nothing would go wrong.

With respect to future recruitment, many respondents felt that even though young people were willing to devote themselves to ministerial work, they were unwilling to join the Conference. They claimed that life-long commitment to one organization seemed unthinkable and unacceptable to today's young people. Also, they could not envision a gratifying career path in the MCHK. Simply worked as a humble servant for the rest of their life could not satisfy the young generation. In the eyes of the young people, the workload of the present staff was also unreasonably heavy. Young people would feel reluctant to sacrifice their private life for the job. Even if they were willing to devote in

church work, they did not prepare or want to involve too much in non-pastoral work. With respect to the choice of seminary, in the future this would not be a major concern because candidates were not confined to study in one designated seminary. More choices were available.

d. Support from Conference

Some respondents expressed that support from the Conference was limited and insufficient. When they faced with problems and difficulties, the Conference could not be of help. Under the threefold ministry model, the respondents felt that on-the-job training was essential and yet lacking. They were trained as ministers, so it was understandable that they lacked the expertise to run schools and social service centres. When they were required to do so, they needed close supervision and/or training. But they felt the Conference was, at present, unable to provide such assistance. With regard to colleagues' help and support, some felt that everyone was too busy to share other people's burden.

e. Staff Benefits

Some respondents complained about the inadequacies of staff benefit, e.g. salary, allowance and housing. A few respondents even remarked that there was unfairness in Conference's handling staff benefit, stationing and other matters.

Some other respondents thought that the present benefit scheme was acceptable and was in fact far better than before. They questioned the commitment of those who demanded more from the Conference.

f. Summary

Major personnel issues revolved around the centralized Conference human resource management system. Recruitment process was unable to

meet the demands of the younger generation, the prospective candidates. Many respondents remarked that the heavy workload and the stationing system had caused much grievances. Also, it was noted that support from colleagues and Conference was limited.

3. Relationship between Conference and Local Churches

Many respondents thought that the relationships between Conference and local churches was barely acceptable. In principle, local churches were autonomous, self-contained units independent of the Conference. When a pastoral worker being assigned to a local church, he might protect the interests of the church for which he was responsible and not that of the Conference. It was not uncommon that pastoral workers paid superficial effort in meeting Conference's demands. It appeared that the centralized system had lost its true meaning in building up a tight relationship among all sectors.

a. Functions and Activities

The respondents agreed that conference has good intention in organizing activities to help and serve member churches. In practice, however, many activities were repetitive. Some felt that it had become an obligation for local churches to assign members to participate in Conference activities. Some respondents felt that the congregation knew little about the Conference, its roles and functions; they could not see the benefit of participating in the activities. Therefore their involvement was minimal and reluctant.

Some respondents thought that smaller churches would benefit more from the activities arranged by the Conference since they had limited resources. But it all depended on the nature of the activity.

b. Laity Participation in Conference Activities

Many respondents noted that there were too many Conference committees and subcommittees. They were being repetitive and inefficient. The democratic spirit of MCHK required extensive lay participation. Almost all committees consisted of lay delegates and pastoral workers. These committees drained the local churches of their limited human resources, leaving junior and inexperienced members running church affairs. As a result, the quality of the local church could never be improved. Also, many committees organized programmes and activities just to demonstrate that they were functioning.

Committees were not wholly run by laity. Conference chairman, vice-chairman and secretary were *ex-officio* members of all committees. The rest of the members could be either pastoral workers or lay delegates. Normally there would be more than one pastoral worker sitting in a committee, overseeing and monitoring the operation. Congregation of a local church might feel being exploited as their pastor had to attend different committee meetings and affairs leaving little time to minister to the congregation. It resulted in congregation's resentment and grievances towards the Conference.

c. Offering Contribution

Concerning the 45% offering contribution to Conference, most respondents thought that the 45% itself was not the issue. The problem lied in the linkage between contribution and allocation of staff. The respondents revealed that some local churches blamed the Conference for asking too much while at the same time giving too little. Some churches felt that either pastors were not allotted to their church or there was frequent change of staff. It appeared that unfairness or favoritism was the issue.

Also, the respondents agreed that the congregation sometimes put the blame on the Conference although the local church's financial difficulty was resulted from poor offering within the church. The congregation would think that the church had to satisfy the excessive wants of the Conference and that their benefit was being exploited. Sometimes an antagonistic atmosphere was felt. On the other hand, some respondents admitted that local churches relied too much upon the Conference for provision and support that they did not need to care whether they were financially independent.

d. Summary

It was agreed that the relationships between Conference and local churches had much to be improved. There were conflicts of interest to the pastoral workers who had dual roles, one being Conference staff another being local church minister. Especially when resources were scarce, relationships became more tense. Also, to the lay members, participating in Conference activities and understanding the management style of Conference with respect to ministers stationing and financial resource allocation were not without problems since they generally had little knowledge about the function and meaning of Conference.

4. Management of the Conference Office

In general, all respondents agreed that management and operation of the Conference office was efficient. Most respondents agreed that staff in the Conference office had been working hard. However, several respondents pointed out that certain positions were redundant. In view of the huge expenditure, careful manpower planning and allocation was needed.

5. Relationships among Local Churches

So far the relationships among churches were loose. The respondents felt that they simply did not have any more time and energy to attempt building up relationship with other churches. There were some occasions that inter-church activities were organized but in general church units related more to the Conference. Through their participation in Conference activities and committees, representatives were able to know people from other churches.

IV. Diagnosis by Consultant (Phase 4)

What differentiated the MCHK from other denominations? From the survey results, it was clear that the management emphasized three elements that distinguished the MCHK from other churches.

First, the MCHK adopted a threefold ministry philosophy. The three integrative elements were preaching, education, and social service. Of these three elements, preaching was primary. Church planting was the fundamental task of the MCHK. Whenever possible, schools and service centres were built to complement the service of local churches. In principle, wherever there was a school or centre, there ought to be a church and not vice versa. To put this objective into practice had been more difficult today than decades ago because more and more professionalism in the fields of education and social service required trained and professional personnel to run schools and centres. Ministers who were trained in seminaries found coordinating these three elements a difficult task, not to mention operating schools or centres themselves.

Second, the heritage of methodism was manifested in the excessive devotion to methods (from the word "methodism"), procedures, and regulations. The tradition was held in high regard and layers of hierarchy were generated to secure this tradition. Also, it resulted in a

rather centralized organization structure. The Conference was not merely a coordinating body. Human and financial resources, for example, were centralized in the Conference. Decisions ought to be funneled back to the Conference or its subordinate committees. However, line of authority was sometimes unclear because there were different committees handling more or less similar tasks.

Third, the democratic spirit was highly valued by the management. The spirit of democracy was exhibited in the extensive participation of laity in the decision-making process. Participative management approach was emphasized in the MCHK. Lay members were service receivers as well as organization members who participated in making decisions concerning how services should be delivered. It should be noted that many decisions were in fact centralized in the higher levels of the Conference. Lay participation was extended to the highest level of the hierarchy.

These three features, though upheld by the management, are not without drawbacks. Relating to these three features, the survey results revealed some problems that the MCHK was facing. The different problems could be categorized into the following six areas that the MCHK should deal with if she wanted to strengthen the organization.

1. The oversized organization structure;
2. The inefficient decision-making process;
3. Laity participation conflicts;
4. Unsatisfactory relationships between Conference and church unites;
5. Complaints about recruitment, stationing and human resources management; and
6. Lacking in team spirit, members are not working for the same common goal.

A. Organization Structure

The centralized management approach plus the committee system produced a complex organization structure. The top of the hierarchy was the Conference which was subordinated by different functional committees. At the bottom of the hierarchy were local churches which could be seen as geographical divisions. In principle, local churches were autonomous profit centres because they ought to be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating, except that pastoral workers were stationed by the Conference and part of the offering received by local churches should be forwarded to the Conference. Committees were functional units and were positioned at the near top level of the hierarchy. They were decision-making and coordinating units consisted of pastoral workers and lay members from local churches. Viewing from this perspective, the MCHK had a near hybrid organization structure.

Most pastoral workers had multiple roles. They were Conference recruited staff, stationed in local churches. Also they might be appointed to be members of the functional committees. The Conference, local churches, and committees/divisions all generated various subcommittees and meetings. These combined into layers of management. It was natural that pastoral workers and lay members who involved in church work might find the system complicate and the meetings innumerable and repetitive.

Another drawback was the generation of a complicated reporting system. It followed that the communication channel was affected as well. A typical pastoral worker has to report to the board of local church, the respective Circuit, Standing Committee, Ministerial Session and other related meetings/committees.

It was evident that the organization design was complicated and it cost much manpower and resources to operate and maintain the

system. The structure should be streamlined so that line of authority would be clearer. Excessive layers should be canceled. Decision-making and advisory units should be distinguished so that a simplified reporting system could be produced. More efficient information flow, i.e. a better communication channel would then be established.

B. Decision-Making Process

This complex organization structure resulted in rather unclear line of authority. In fact the whole system was designed in a way that the final decision of most affairs should be made collectively. In most cases, a layer or a committee did have some authority but without ultimate responsibility. Most decisions were to be funneled back several layers. Also, decision-making authority was mixed with advisory and consultative functions. Sometimes authority and responsibility became obscure.

Oversized committee was another common phenomenon. For example, the Standing Committee had 41 members, members of other Conference Committees ranged from 9 to 20. The size of committee itself made it difficult for discussion and careful decision-making.

When decisions had to go through several committees/ layers, while some committees were not regularly in session, it significantly delayed the decision-making process. Indeed many affairs had to be passed through several committees before final decisions could be made. The general feeling was that decision-making process in the MCHK was slow and inefficient.

Still, information had to be supplied to all levels involved for discussion. Overflow of paperwork was inevitable. In addition, pastoral workers of local churches could be members of various committees and occupied higher hierarchical positions. It was time consuming to attend the various meetings and read all the documents to prepare for those

meetings. One complaint was that pastoral workers spent too much time in handling non-pastoral tasks.

Another drawback of a long decision-making process was that task and authority differentiation between committees was unclear. First, in order to obtain an application one had to go through different committees to secure a collective approval. Second, one committee would rely on another for in-depth examination. At the same time, what was passed over to a committee meant informal approval from the other and should not be overruled or questioned. Members of a committee had little motivation to take up responsibility seriously. It then allowed for administrative loopholes. Wrong decisions would be made.

Therefore the decision-making process should be examined and streamlined to provide a efficient and effective route.

C. Laity Participation

Lay members were basically service receivers. In a reciprocal process, the service receiver would become service provider, helping the pastoral worker to deliver service to younger and newer members of the church. In line with the democratic spirit of the MCHK, lay members were encouraged to participate in higher management level so they were also decision maker in the hierarchy. It gave the laity a special status in the church. In fact lay members were held in high regard.

The status and involvement of laity caused some problems. First, there was conflict of authority between laity and pastoral workers. Laity participation was fundamental to the democratic spirit of the MCHK. Balance of power between laity and pastoral workers was an intentional device. However, pastoral workers might sometimes feel that their authority was restricted. More importantly, pastoral worker was supposed to be leader of the church ministering laity. Pastoral worker would feel

embarrassed and even offended when laity appraised their performance and discussed their stationing. A more sensitive matter concerns the selection of pastoral candidates when these candidates were subject to the scrutiny of both laity and ministers. To some candidates, the process was tough and embarrassing.

Second, when competent and mature lay members participated in the Conference, comparatively less time and energy was left for the local church to which they belonged. Unless the local church had sufficient manpower, otherwise tensions would be created within the local church. The MCHK had a rather limited pool of human resources. The division and committee system both drew people from the same pool. Obviously manpower was tight. Church growth was a major solution but it all depended on the quality and involvement of pastoral workers and lay members in evangelistic work and other church affairs.

Third, lay participation, if put into practice, required extensive laity involvement in different committees and meetings. The size of committees would be relatively large in order to incorporate these members. But oversized committee was a handicap for efficient discussion. Also, if participants did not make preparation before coming to the meeting, discussion would be time-consuming yet futile. Therefore, a better balance of lay involvement should be reached.

D. Relationships between Conference and Local Churches

Local churches were autonomous profit centres. The Conference was the coordinating headquarter. The Conference centralized and reallocated resources. Financial and human resources were two major resources. Strategic and long term plan should also be provided by the Conference.

By means of committees, meetings in the hierarchical levels, and

laity participation, formal relationships and communication channels connecting local churches and the Conference were built. This did not lead to effective informal, social relationships between the two. Attending meeting was one matter, joining activities and feeling like part of the family was another. In some cases, the Conference was unable to draw lay members to participate in Conference arranged activities. Also, the feeling of both sides was that there was a lacking in mutual support and understanding.

The issue of resource allocation further complicated the matter. Disputes revolved around human and financial resources allocation. It jeopardized the formal relationships between Conference and local churches. The Conference's intention was to better allocate resources but it created complaints and grievances instead. Now the headquarter even found the coordinating function losing much of its strength.

It was necessary to reassess the formal relationships between Conference and local churches. Activities and functions should be evaluated to see whether they really helped the local churches and improved the relationships between the two. Informal and social relationships should be built to complement the structured relationship.

E. Recruitment, Stationing, and Human Resources Management

It was widely agreed that there was a shortage of manpower. As a service organization, the MCHK relied on pastoral workers to deliver services to the church members. The pastoral workers recruited by the Conference were entitled to life-long office. The central recruitment, training, orientation and stationing system should be able to safeguard the quality and commitment of pastoral workers. By means of these procedures, pastoral workers would be able to identify with the mission and philosophy of MCHK.

Lacking in pastoral workers directly affected church work. More specifically, church members could not receive sufficient attention and guidance from their ministers. But the strength of the church at large depended on the quality of lay members. So manpower was a fundamental issue faced by the MCHK.

In many cases, church work was left to parish preachers who were not recruited by the Conference and did not go through the recruitment, orientation, and training process. These parish preachers might not identify with the MCHK although they could be devoted workers. Since they did not enjoy life-long office, the turnover of parish workers in the past was rather high.

Recruitment and staff turnover were important issues to be dealt with in order to improve the present situation. Even Conference recruited pastoral workers left the MCHK for various reasons. The reasons that caused workers leaving the organization and hindered possible candidates from joining the Conference should be examined. Among other things, the heavy workload, the unduly long recruitment process, the life-long office, and the ungratifying career path were aspects that should be noted.

F. Staff Relations and Team Spirit

There was formal mechanism that grouped pastoral workers together. There were scheduled pastoral workers meetings for discussion and sharing. But different pastoral workers remarked in the interviews that they felt lonely and without support. They remarked that the meetings had become routine. Younger workers expressed stronger feeling. It seemed that the team of pastoral workers were divided into older and younger generations. The two camps resented each other. In fact there was little consensus concerning present church work strategy

and future direction. Interpersonal conflicts were felt. But the workers expressed a sullen sense of impossibility to making improvement.

Two reasons accounted for this situation. First, there was in fact two generation groups of workers, one in their late forties or older, the other in their thirties. There was a discontinuity, a missing link. The two generations looked at job, ministry and personal life in a much different way. It required greater patience and understanding to hold the two camps together.

Second, the management practices of commercial world and Christian world were somewhat different. Today, wherever possible Christian organizations followed commercial practices. Staff benefit scheme was a good example. Still, the differences must be noted. A balance should be reached in order to achieve work efficiency and employee satisfaction. For example, should performance appraisal be introduced? Should pastoral workers be judged by their performance? And how should the management interpret the criteria for performance--preaching, caring, and/or administration? These were sensitive questions. Since each pastoral worker had his own view and opinion, consensus was not reached.

It seemed that every pastoral worker had been working for their own goal. It followed that they all felt working alone. However, working together as a team could accomplish more than the total individual efforts of its members, especially when manpower was tight. Apparently much work had to be done to build up a strong, energetic, and committed work team.

These six areas were in fact related to one another. They were not separate items. All six areas should be dealt with in order to strengthen the MCHK. However, priority must be set because it was impossible to

resolve all six problems at the same time. Prioritization was left to discretion of the management of the MCHK.

V. Feedback to Client (Phase 5)

According to the original plan, the consultant was supposed to report to the Executives' Meeting. However, the consultant was invited to present findings at the Strategic Development Committee's Meeting, because the Executives' Meeting thought that the Strategic Development Committee was working on similar issues. Since most members of the Executives' Meeting were also members of the Strategic Development Committee, and the Committee had to present a major report on local churches evaluation, the consultant was also invited to exchange opinions with the Strategic Development Committee and to discuss future research areas that would complement each other's job.

Before the meeting, the consultant's report of the questionnaire survey and the interviews was submitted to the Conference office and distributed to each attendant.

The report submitted to attendants of the meeting covered the data collection procedures, major survey findings and a brief summary of observations provided by the consultant. The survey results were categorized into five areas, namely 1) organization structure, 2) human resources, 3) relationships between Conference and local churches, 4) management of the Conference; and 5) relationships among local churches. Of these five areas, much emphasis was put on organization structure and human resources management. In the concluding section, six areas for further investigation were suggested by the consultant.

The participants (excluding consultant) of the meeting included:

Table 2. Attendants of the Feedback Meeting

	Pastoral Worker	Laity
Executives' Meeting	3	2
Strategic Development Committee	-	3

Since the report was submitted to all attendants beforehand, in the meeting the consultant only briefly summarized the findings. The consultant further introduced the purpose of the meeting and invited the attendants to express their opinions about the findings and work on the information revealed in the report.

The Conference chairman was quick to respond that he was deeply troubled by the report. He stated that he was stunned by the negative situation revealed. He and other attendants further questioned about the validity of the report. First, would the result be overshadowed or dominated by the younger generation, and were there different opinions from younger and older generations? Second, was the scenario depicted in the report a true and full picture? It was clear that almost all attendants pointed to the younger pastoral workers for giving negative responses. Anyhow, most members said that they were not surprised by the report. They agreed that the information was not new to them; the younger generation was known to be critical. And at the same time the report was only revealing a common situation faced by most churches and Christian organizations in Hong Kong.

The consultant explained that the report only revealed areas concerned by the respondents. In fact the respondents were asked to discuss both strengths and weaknesses. However, most of the responses were pointed to the negative side. This was natural because survey respondents usually expressed dissatisfaction and looked for improvement

when answering questions.

During the feedback meeting, some of the behavior of the attendants should be noted. First of all, some members appeared to be quite defensive. Perhaps it was because they suspected that negative things revealed were pointed to them. The defensiveness led to their skeptical attitude towards the validity of data. It followed that they denied taking up the responsibility and claimed that the results did not apply to them. They blamed the younger generation instead for causing the troubles and biased the results.

VI. Discussion (Phase 6)

By means of discussion and communication, it was possible for the consultant to clarify the findings. Also, discussion among the attendants facilitated their recognition of the problems. The group continued to discuss what the findings revealed to the church and tried to identify issues to be examined in the next stage.

The attendants maintained that firstly, the tradition of integrating ministry, education and service was to be uphold; and secondly, the present system of centralization of human and financial resources should be remained unchanged. Although these two traditions had revealed a number of weaknesses, the advantages of keeping them still outweighed the disadvantages.

They suggested the consultant to investigate three aspects: 1. the organization structure; 2. decision-making process; and 3. relationships between Conference and local churches. They insisted that areas concerning recruitment, team building, and laity involvement were to be handled by the management. These were sensitive issues and they probably made the management feel uncomfortable to deal with the problems and even more uncomfortable to let the consultant touch on

them.

According to the consultant's diagnosis, human resources problems were essential areas to be dealt with. Leaving these areas unexamined would be a constraint to this consultation. However, in line with the consultation approach, decisions had to be left to the discretion of the organization members. So the consultant agreed to work on the three aspects suggested by the management.

VII. Summary and Recommendations

The first data feedback cycle was concluded with the identification of three areas by the management for research in the next feedback cycle. The diagnostic work in the following phases would not handle human resources matters any more. But till this stage some observations were gathered and suggestions were given to improve the human system of the MCHK.

From the diagnosis it was clear that manpower shortage was the root of the issue. Because of understaffing, pastoral workers were overloaded with responsibilities, and both pastoral workers and local churches complained about stationing arrangements. In turn, relationships between Conference and local churches were jeopardized. Besides, younger pastoral workers were unable to receive sufficient supervision, support, and training because everyone was busy fulfilling various responsibilities. While the young workers were quick to express their dissatisfaction, their performance was sometimes seen by the senior workers as being dissatisfactory. This resulted in an antagonistic atmosphere between the younger and older workers.

The Strategic Development Committee started to study recruitment matters in 1992 and proposed a number of suggestions to improve the situation. For example, pastoral workers from other denominations may

be recruited as local pastors on contract basis, retired overseas pastors may be recruited, and conditions for parish preachers to join the connexional system may be relaxed. Besides, better reward and benefit scheme was designed to attract workers.

However, the management should note that in Hong Kong demand for pastoral workers far exceeds the supply. From the perspective of the MCHK, better conditions are offered. But in the eyes of pastoral workers and seminarians, the system of MCHK is still restrictive and discriminative. Pastoral workers who are not MCHK members would choose not to join the organization and work like an "outsider" and "second class" worker. Even some MCHK members would refrain from taking the position of parish preacher in local church. Workers have a variety of choices so the improved conditions offered by the MCHK are still not attractive enough to them.

Thus the MCHK must first resolve the problem of unequal status between workers belonged to the connexional system and local churches. It was suggested that after working for a year local church parish preachers may be allowed to participate in the central decision-making mechanism. Though employed by local churches, parish workers are ministering the congregation and leading the church, and they should be entrusted with authority comparable to their responsibility. With respect to authority and power, being able to get hold of information is important. Since MCHK is a centralized organization, participation in central decision-making process has significant implication to the worker.

In addition, the purpose of the life-long office provided by the connexional system is to protect pastoral workers from being treated like employees and support workers in both financial and spiritual sense. The negative side of the system is that it is too restrictive. Today many people do not value life-long office as incentive and support. They want

to have the freedom to choose and change jobs. So the MCHK must consider adjusting the connexional system to be more flexible for workers to join and leave, although life-long office is still upheld and valued. Terms of commitment is one alternative to let workers have chances to leave office and not necessarily create unhappy feeling.

The MCHK usually invites people from the church to join the ministry by means of personal contact and private invitation. In face of severe manpower shortage, the MCHK may arrange larger scale recruitment program like seminars, camps, and other special programs to recruit a group of potential workers in the same period. Cohort recruitment is an effective and efficient way to guide and train a group of workers. Also, it is less threatening for a lay member to join a cohort than to face the tough recruitment procedure alone. Besides, the group can facilitate mutual support among group members.

In fact the management not only needs to rethink the recruitment process, they should also review their attitude towards recruitment and human resources management. For example, they may have to accept that workers may leave the church and work with other organizations after some years of service. They may also need to accept that the younger generation would look for "prospect" in their careers, so parity of status and salary is a consideration for joining the ministry. A more receptive attitude is essential.

But on the other hand, the management must safeguard the quality of its workers. So it is suggested that every one to two years performance appraisal be conducted for pastoral workers. It is indeed difficult to measure ministerial works. So the objective of performance appraisal is not to punish or reward workers, but to facilitate a discussion on workload, responsibility, improvement, training, and future development.

Today, the different attitudes towards career and ministry partly accounts for the poor team spirit of the pastoral workers. Team building sessions are useful in helping pastoral workers pull together and work as a team and not as individual workers.

Another issue concerning the human system is lay participation. The diagnosis indicates that lay participation should be reduced. It is expected that committee size could accordingly be reduced to facilitate effective discussion and decision-making. And lay members would be able to spend more time working in local churches.

The second data feedback cycle will not examine the human system, but diagnosis of the structural aspect of MCHK will inevitably affect the human aspect. Recommendations given here will be referred to whenever applicable.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONSULTATION PROCESS PHASES SEVEN AND EIGHT

(7) further data gathering → (8) diagnosis by consultant

I. Introduction to Feedback Cycle Two

The first feedback cycle provided us with a brief picture of the present situation of the MCHK and oriented us to the basic issues and problems faced by the organization. According to the opinions expressed by the pastoral workers and the diagnosis conducted by the consultant, six problem areas were identified. Three aspects, i.e. the organization structure, decision-making process, and the relationships between Conference and local churches were chosen by the management for further investigation. The consultant was asked to investigate these problems and provide recommendations for improvement.

The three noted areas revolved around the organization structure and processes. Reasons for causing the deficiencies as perceived by the pastoral workers were surfaced in the first feedback cycle. The purpose of the second feedback cycle was to analyze these problems, to detect whether there were other unnoticed reasons, to relate these problems to other organizational processes, to look for corrective actions, and to feedback to the management for action planning. The three phases of the cycle consisted of:

Phase 7: data collection

Phase 8: analysis and diagnosis by consultant

Phase 9: feedback to management

The present chapter reported works done in phases seven and eight.

II. Data Collection (Phase 7)

A. Methodology

The first cycle had used questionnaires and interviews to collect data concerning the perception of management with regard to the MCHK and her functioning. For the second feedback cycle, unobtrusive measures were used to collect data and examine the organization structure and organizational processes. Primarily secondary data were used for the diagnosis.

Reasons for using unobtrusive measures included:

1. The MCHK has kept an immense amount of secondary data in the normal course of activities. The Conference office in particular regularly prepares records, documents, and statistical data about the progress of different church functioning.
2. Secondary data contains "factual" records that are less biased as compared to subjective opinions expressed by organization members although there is still chances of misinterpretation.
3. By combining data from 1) interviews and questionnaires obtained in the first feedback cycle, and 2) secondary sources obtained in the second cycle, the consultant was able to make comparisons and reconcile inconsistent or biased information.

Therefore, by means of collecting and examining secondary data of the MCHK, the consultant was able to obtain relevant information for diagnosis.

B. Data Collection

The MCHK has continually collected different kinds of data in the

organization and most data are in usable forms for the convenient use of the consultant. In addition, the consultant was permitted to access to such data.

Several kinds of data were collected for analysis:

1. minutes of the Standing Committee's meetings from 1993 to 1994;
2. minutes of the Strategic Development Committee's meetings since commencement;
3. minutes of the Representative and Ministerial Sessions' meetings from 1992 to 1993;
3. financial and personnel data obtained from the Conference office;
4. publications of the MCHK including bulletins, centenary special issue, etc.;
5. Constitution and By-laws; and
6. other documentation mainly provided by the Conference office.

In the course of consultation, pastoral workers and staff of the Conference office were consulted for information clarification and explanation on areas unclear to the consultant. For example, Conference staff was asked to explain the process of fund application because the document did not provide a full description of the procedures involved.

III. Diagnosis by Consultant (Phase 8)

The first feedback cycle has oriented us to the direction of the present diagnosis. The diagnostic work here would follow the direction as concluded in the first cycle.

The three problem areas agreed on the last meeting would be dealt with, i.e. organization structure, decision-making process, and the relationships between Conference and local churches. The purpose was to find out the causes and to develop recommendations.

The diagnosis must exhibit special care so that concrete solutions

would be applicable to the organization and acceptable to both management and congregation. So it was important to identify in the first place the strengths and core values of the MCHK, those aspects that the organization preferred to remain unchanged, and consequently the limitations of the consultation. These factors must be put forward before commencement of analysis to facilitate a balanced diagnosis which would be able to preserve the essence of some important elements while at the same time introduce corrective actions to the organization.

The diagnostic work involved several aspects. First, the organization structure was examined, which included the decision-making process. So, the second step was concentrated on analyzing the decision-making procedures. Finally, the relationships between Conference and local churches was studied. Diagnosis and recommendations were given for each issue discussed.

A. Factors for Consideration

The core values and strengths, the areas that the MCHK preferred to remain unchanged, and the limitations of the consultation were to be noted before commencement of diagnosis.

1. Core Values and Strengths

The strengths and distinctive features of the MCHK as perceived by management are the threefold ministry, the tight check and balance mechanism, and the democratic spirit.

a. The Threefold Ministry Concept

A major distinguishing feature that differentiates the MCHK from other Christian denominations is the threefold ministry philosophy. This concept is regarded as the mission of MCHK in the eighties. Most

Christian churches would take preaching their *raison d'être*. The MCHK not only preaches the gospel but she also wants to satisfy the physical and social needs of people by providing education and social services to the public. This is where the MCHK differentiates herself from other Christian denominations. Churches are different from business organizations because basically they do not compete against each other. So the threefold ministry concept can be seen as a distinguishing feature rather than a competitive edge.

In order that the three integrative elements could be implemented effectively, the MCHK has long adopted a rather centralized management approach. The Conference, acting as headquarters, centralized 1) decision-making authority concerning policy and strategy, and 2) human and financial resources. The management admitted that coordinating the three distinctly different functions, i.e. preaching, education and social services was definitely not an easy task. The adoption of a centralized management approach was intended to provide flexibility, responsiveness and strategic direction needed for coordinating the three functions.

Today this philosophy was challenged. The MCHK finds it difficult to implement the integrative concept in the nineties in face of manpower shortage and the growing emphasis of professionalism. Nevertheless, the integrative philosophy is still valued by the MCHK. The threefold ministry concept were not to be abandoned. Nor the schools and social service centres were to be closed down.

Last December the Strategic Development Committee prepared a report suggesting that the objective of the MCHK in the nineties is to strengthen local churches in order that they would be self-supporting, growing, witnessing, and mutually supportive. The Committee aimed to highlight the leading role of preaching.

b. The Check and Balance Mechanism

The tight check and balance mechanism is seen as a heritage of methodism. The pastoral workers were confident that the centralized system and the control mechanism were so strong that no major mistake would be found or made in the MCHK. The only concern was that it has a possibility of over-centralization or over-bureaucratization.

c. The Democratic Spirit

The MCHK champions democracy and the spirit is seen in the form of extensive laity participation and collective decision-making process. Lay members coming from local churches (which belong to the lowest level of hierarchy) would represent the local churches and participate in higher levels of management for decision-making and policy formulation.

2. Limitations and Other Important Factors

What was most important to the survival and growth of MCHK should be handled with care in the course of diagnosis. As mentioned in Chapter Three on background of MCHK, both human and financial resources are centralized. Between the two, human resources issues are very important yet sensitive. Indeed a service organization has to depend on its employees to deliver services. But unlike many other religious organizations the MCHK does not consider ministers as mere employees.

The "connexional system" is a device for protecting ministers from being treated like employees. The management stressed that the "connexional system" should be remained unchanged although there were complaints and grievances about the system and its management. Not only is the system an inherited tradition, it is also the pillar of

Conference functioning.

The MCHK relies upon the ministers to preach, care, and administer. While the task of caring and administering could be delegated, to a great extent the responsibility of preaching could not be delegated. Ministers are called to preach. Therefore the MCHK regards ministers as being central to the church functioning.

In fact, a normal conversion process cannot completely explain the functioning of church. Not only ministers are responsible for service delivery, the service recipients are also involved in the process. When non-believers are led to the church, converted, and become church members, they would not leave the church as normal outputs do. Converts stay in the church and help ministers to preach, care, and administer. In a reciprocal process, organization members, after receiving the service, would feedback and become service providers. Therefore not only ministers are important to the church, lay members are also important assets of the MCHK. But the last survey revealed that laity participation has become more and more a serious problem to the church because on one hand quality laity is lacking and on the other hand ministerial workers are frustrated to the laity's involvement in making decisions on matters related to ministers themselves.

So, human resources including ministers and laity are most important and valuable to the MCHK and need to be handled with care, especially when human resources matters are already hot and sensitive issues in the church. Improvements in these areas certainly can benefit the church greatly. But the management had expressed that they preferred the consultant not to touch on human resources issues, including the team spirit, the "connexional system" and even laity participation. So this is noted as limitation of the consultation.

3. Summary

Several factors must be handled with care in the diagnosis so that the essence of such practices/functioning could be secured and enhanced:

- a. the threefold ministry concept;
- b. the democratic spirit, that is, collective decision-making procedure and laity participation;
- c. the methodical spirit, that is, the centralized system and the check and balance mechanism; and
- d. the connexional system.

B. Direction of Diagnosis

On the completion of the first feedback cycle, direction for the present diagnostic work was surfaced and ascertained.

1. *Streamlining*

Whether it be organization structure or organizational processes the direction is streamlining. To turn the complicated structure and processes into simplified and smooth functioning, to eliminate redundant works and reduce workloads, and to make the organization functioning more effective and efficient are the focuses of the present diagnosis.

2. *Decentralization*

The Strategic Development Committee proposed that decentralization of authority to local churches was a necessary step for the MCHK in the nineties. The present diagnostic work was conducted in line with this concept. The corrective actions recommended should complement the decentralization model proposed by the Committee.

C. Analysis of Organization Structure

Basically an organization structure is used to reflect and exercise control and authority. An effective organization structure should exhibit the following features: 1) being able to facilitate the execution of organization mission and objectives successfully; 2) being able to reflect and enhance the activities and the processes of the organization; and 3) being able to show the line of authority and command. Above all, the structure should be a vehicle for organizational control and effectiveness. For our analysis here, we adopt the classic theory of organization structure which advocates that form follows function (Manzini, 1988).

It appeared that the organization chart of the MCHK did not give much help in our analysis. The complexities of the MCHK structure made the organization chart less useful in describing actual responsibilities, interactions and processes in the organization. To a large extent, this was due to the reciprocal process and the committee system mentioned in the previous sections. Often ministers and lay representatives appeared in different levels of authority and in different roles and positions that complicated the reporting relationships and line of authority. So, the diagnostic focus here is not on individual person or position, but rather on groups or committees.

From the first survey feedback analysis, the following organization structure deficiencies were revealed:

1. There was general role conflicts and ambiguity for personnel resulting from a complex structure;
2. There were too many committees and meetings that ministers needed to attend; time and energy were invested in meeting demands of different meetings/committees, but efficient organizational process was not effected; and

3. The line of authority and reporting relationships were unclear, especially when many ministers and lay representatives had multiple roles in the committee structure.

These three issues could be boiled down to two aspects for investigation in the present diagnostic work: 1) the committee structure and 2) levels of authority and reporting relationships.

1. Committee Structure

Like most not-for-profit organizations, committees in the MCHK constitute an important part of the organization structure. Committees are set up to perform and control different church functions.

a. Analysis

i) Standing Committee

Currently the highest committee level is the Standing Committee which consists of 41 members, 12 being ministers and 29 lay representatives (1993-94). Normally six to eight Committee meetings are held in a year. Major decisions are made by the Committee and formally approved by the Representative Session.

But the size of the Committee makes detailed discussion difficult. Therefore, operational responsibilities are vested with the Executives' Meeting which consists of ten members this year, including the *ex-officio* members of the Standing Committee and the Executive Secretary of the Conference office. (See Ch.3,II.A.2, pp. 21-22)

ii) Executives' Meeting

Indeed the Executives' Meeting is the core management team. The main duties of the Standing Committee are to administer church affairs, to coordinate works of subsidiaries and committees, and to carry out

policies and programmes of the Conference. Considering the size of the Committee and the interval of the meetings held, it is impossible for the Committee to fulfil its responsibilities effectively. So the role of the Executives' Meeting is more important than what is indicated in the organization chart as being a coordinating unit only. (See Ch.3, II.B.1, p. 23) The Meeting has to monitor all church affairs and carefully study every motion before it is submitted to the Standing Committee for approval. It seems that the Executives' Meeting is the real controlling body. The dilemma is that it does not have the authority to rule and decide.

In most cases both local churches and committees are not required to submit reports, proposals, and applications to the Executives' Meeting. The Meeting gathers information through its organization-wide network and through the Conference office. The Executive Secretary of the Conference office is not legitimate member of the Conference Committees, she is only observer to all Conference Committees. Through the Executive Secretary, other staff in the Conference office, and the *ex-officio* members, information is gathered. It is not uncommon that the Executives' Meeting would recommend to the Standing Committee details, proposals, suggestions, and possible solutions to certain issues. So it is the Executives' Meeting which truly monitors the operation of the MCHK.

It is evident that the reporting relationship is ambiguous. Both local churches and Conference Committees do not need to report formally to the Executives' Meeting. But the Meeting closely monitors their operations and submits proposals and suggestions to the Standing Committee.

Another issue revealed in the above analysis concerns the status of the Executive Secretary of the Conference office. Being a full-time staff devoted to the work of the MCHK and the chief administrator in

charge of the Conference office, so far she is not treated as official member of any Conference committee. However, she is an official member in the Kowloon Circuit and the Representative Session because she is lay representative appointed/elected by the local church to which she belonged.

This perhaps is a tradition of the MCHK. Traditionally administrative personnel in religious institutions are mainly clerical staff or even janitors supporting the ministry. But in recent years, due to the expansion of many religious organizations, administrative personnel of higher calibre and better training is recruited. Today many religious organizations admit that some, if not all, non-pastoral staff working in religious institutions should be treated as ministerial workers. In fact the commitment of these people to their work is no less than their counterparts performing the pastoral functions. In the case of MCHK, the Executive Secretary of the Conference office (and perhaps other executive secretaries of the Conference office as well) has taken up many duties and is justified to have a rightful place in the committee structure.

iii) Conference Committees

Under the Standing Committee, there are nine committees focusing on different church functioning. The Mission & Pastoral Care Committee, School Education Committee, and Social Services Committee represent the three integrative elements of the MCHK respectively. (See Ch.3, II.A.4, pp. 22-23.) The composition and activities of these committees in 1993-94 demonstrate their importance.

1. Mission & Pastoral Care Committee:

Twenty members (ten ministers and ten lay representatives)

Sub-committees include:

- (1) executive sub-committee
- (2) youth work sub-committee
- (3) teenage work sub-committee
- (4) Sunday school sub-committee
- (5) family sub-committee
- (6) training sub-committee
- (7) Christian youth army concern group
- (8) Church music concern group
- (9) local mission concern group
- (10) overseas mission concern group
- (11) subscription group

There are eleven sub-committees in total. Except the executive committee, all sub-committees have specific and quite narrowly focused areas.

2. School Education Committee

The committee has eighteen members (seven ministers and eleven lay representatives). The sub-committees include:

- (1) executive committee
- (2) principal selection sub-committee
- (3) head master selection sub-committee
- (4) school support scheme sub-committee

In addition, there are six high school boards of directors and seven primary school boards of directors.

3. Social Services Committee

The committee has thirteen members (seven ministers and six lay representatives). The sub-committees include:

(1) executive committee

(2) social concern sub-committee

The six social service centres all set up their respective boards of directors.

4. Constitution Committee

The committee consists of nine members (five ministers and four lay representatives).

Only an executive committee works under the committee.

5. Finance & Property Management Committee

The committee consists of ten members (four ministers and six lay representatives). The sub-committees include:

- (1) salary sub-committee;
- (2) property sub-committee;
- (3) investment sub-committee; and
- (4) investment executive sub-committee.

6. Literature Committee

The committee consists of ten members (five ministers and five lay representatives).

There was only an executive committee works under the committee.

7. Stationing Committee

The committee consists of seventeen members (five ministers and twelve lay representatives).

The stationing committee has no sub-committees.

8. Pastoral Workers' Selection and Training Committee

The committee consists of thirteen members (six ministers and seven lay representatives).

There is only one sub-committee, i.e. the Chan S W Fund Executive Committee.

9. Local Preachers Committee

The committee consists of ten members (five ministers and five lay representatives). The sub-committees include:

- (1) training sub-committee; and
- (2) probationary training sub-committee.

It could be seen from the above account that proportion of laity and ministers is more or less equal in each committee. An exception is the Stationing Committee in which lay representatives more than doubles the number of ministers.

Also, Missions & Pastoral Care division has set up more sub-committees than other divisions and committees. In 1991 the Committee already underwent a major re-structuring. Previously there were three sub-committees, i.e. Youth Work Sub-committee, Christian Education Sub-committee, and the Local Preacher Sub-committee. Under each sub-committee, there were several working committees focusing on different aspects of concern. Feeling that the sub-committees were in fact a redundant layer for reporting, the management decided to cancel the sub-committees and make the Committee directly supervise the working committees. Five executive committees and four concern groups were established in 1991. The reason for re-structuring as stated in the minutes of the Representative Session in 1991 was that Conference Committees should focus on the following responsibilities: 1) strategy

formation and policy-making, 2) development of ministry that local churches are unable to handle, 3) church growth, and 4) effective allocation of the limited resources. To date, there are eleven committees/concern groups supervised by the Committee.

The president, vice-president and secretary are *ex-officio* members of all nine committees and some of the sub-committees and boards of directors. The executive secretaries of the three divisions are *ex-officio* members of all boards of directors of the respective schools or social service centres. The *ex-officio* members all need to attend the Executives' Meeting. Counting the appearances of Executives' Meeting members in different Conference committees/sub-committees, a brief picture of their workload could be gathered.

Table 3. Participation of Members of Standing Committee in Conference Committees

Minister/Laity (M/L)	Conference Committees	Centre Boards	School Boards	Total
Number of meetings attended by <i>ex officio</i> members				
President M	21	2	9	32
Vice-president L	20	1	4	25
Secretary M	22	4	4	30
Treasurer L	10	2	4	16
Executive Secretary, Missions M	15	2	3	20
Executive Secretary, School L	7	0	13	20
Executive Secretary, Social Services M	6	9	2	17
Superintendent, Hong Kong M	24	1	6	31
Superintendent, Kowloon M	12	3	5	20
Average number of meetings attended by non- <i>ex-officio</i> members				
Other Conference Ministers (11 persons)	3	1	1	5
Other Lay Members (21 persons)	4	0.6	0.7	5.3

The eleven Conference committees have generated 24 sub-committees, excluding boards of directors of schools and social service centres. Almost all members of the Executives' Meeting have to sit in more than 10 committees. The President, Vice-President, and the Secretary, being *ex-officio* members of almost all conference committees, attend at least 20 committees. Adding the boards of directors of schools and social service centres, they need to attend 25 to 32 committees/meetings.

It should be noted that this account only describes the Conference level committee arrangement. There are also ad hoc committees and many other meetings in the local church level that ministers need to attend. In addition, pastoral workers may need to represent the MCHK in other religious organizations such as the Hong Kong Christian Council, the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Churches Union, and the board of directors of the authorized seminaries for Church members to enrol if they want to join ministerial work.

It is understandable that members of Executives' Meeting have to attend so many meetings. According to the Constitution, they are not only *ex-officio* members of Standing Committee, some of them are also *ex-officio* members of other committees.

Outside the Executives' Meeting, situation is greatly different. Average Conference minister including Conference pastors and deacons only attends three committees. It is evident that responsibilities and power are highly centralized. As mentioned before, committees are central to the organization because they control both resources and decision-making processes. It is evident that the major church functioning is regulated by less than a dozen people. It does not imply that these people dictate the committees. But they are elected to monitor the

operations of the MCHK.

b. Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are made to facilitate a smooth and efficient operation of management.

i) *Ex-officio* members

Since the Executives' Meeting is in fact the core management team, members might find diffusing responsibilities precarious. The top management has to oversee the church functioning. However, the management also conceded that to certain extent authority must be delegated and they agreed that local churches should enjoy greater autonomy.

In order to achieve both objectives (monitoring and delegating) and at the same time reduce individual workload, a more flexible arrangement is needed. Internal arrangement within the Executives' Meeting should be made to allow different members sitting in different meetings and not necessarily all members sitting in all meetings.

Presently the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and the Secretary are *ex-officio* members of almost all Conference committees. Arrangement can be made among the three for their flexible attendance in different committees in order that they could reduce committee responsibilities.

The rationale behind this suggestion is that both ministerial workers and lay representatives should know what is important to the organization and what decision is beneficial to the organization. A higher degree of trust and freedom should be allowed for the operation units. This is also in line with the decentralization concept. The management has to accept that risk is a necessary condition for growth and change.

Even if there is a mistake, it could turn into a learning process. After all, the committees are still attended by one or more *ex-officio* member(s) and other senior members (including ministerial and lay people). In addition, these people will report to the Executives' Meeting their works and progresses. The Meeting still oversees and monitors the church functions.

As number of ministers sitting in committees reduced, lay representatives would also be reduced in order to maintain a desired ratio. It follows that the size of committee would be reduced as well.

ii) Re-grouping of Conference Committee

Another concern about the committee structure is the number of committees generated. The nine committees have produced a total of 24 sub-committees. Attending the different committees, reporting and regulating committee progresses already drain the staff of their time and energy. Large amount of resources have to be invested in maintaining the functioning of these committees.

In order that manpower and other resources could be better utilized, the MCHK has to consider re-grouping the committees to reduce the number of committees and meetings.

Presently the committee structure is designed to monitor church functions. The proposed re-grouping of committees will still maintain the functional structure design. Since many committees are connected to each other and to other units of the organization, the management may first evaluate 1) the major areas of concerns and the strategic focus of the MCHK, and 2) the frequency of meeting, i.e. which committee should meet frequently and which committee only needs to meet occasionally or once a year. Then the management could prioritize the functional areas and design the new groupings. Different committees working on similar areas

can be merged into one or two committees. Considering the frequency and even the length and contents of meetings, the management is able to evaluate whether a new committee is overloaded.

For instance, if stationing and selection are important human resources matters to the management, committees related to these areas can be grouped together. In fact, by comparing the composition of the Stationing Committee, Pastoral Workers' Selection and Training Committee, Local Preachers Committee, and even the Salary Sub-committee (under the Finance and Property Management Committee), one might find that there is much overlapping. If these committees and their sub-committees together are re-grouped into one or two committees, discussion could be more comprehensive. After all, discussing stationing and human resources issues in piecemeal or fragmented manner is certainly less efficient.

One might argue whether the re-grouping of committees is justified because many committees only need to hold one or two meetings throughout the whole year. However, one should consider that the works of preparation, processing, reporting, and networking are still cumbersome.

iii) Duties and Responsibilities of Committees

The re-grouping of committees must be complemented with a clear description of duties and responsibilities for each committee in order to attain the desired result of streamlining of the committee structure. As stated in the 1991 Representative Session concerning the re-structuring of the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee, the objective of Conference Committee should focus on strategy and policy formation and guiding church development. In line with the concept of decentralization, local churches have to take up greater responsibility in deciding and performing the various church functions.

A case in point here concerns the duties of the Missions and Pastoral Care Committee. The re-structuring in 1991 cancelled one reporting layer, but activities run by the Committee did not seem to be reduced.

The management must be reminded that the proposed re-grouping of committees not only needs to reduce the number of committees, but also requires a re-definition of duties and responsibilities. It follows that more activities oriented sub-committees should be cancelled or grouped into one major committee. The Conference committees and its sub-committees would concentrate on formulating and monitoring the direction of ministry and to provide advice to local churches for improvement. In cases where organization-wide activities are desired, ad hoc committees can then be set up. It is unnecessary to have individual functional committees such as Youth Work, Teenage Work, Church Music, Sunday School, Family, and Training, etc., all working hard to promote series of activities, drawing manpower from both ministerial workers and laity. In face of manpower shortage, it is preferable to allocate the limited manpower to the major process and functioning, i.e. preaching and caring.

iv) Status of the Conference Executive Secretary

The analysis of committee structure reveals another issue concerning the status of the Conference Executive Secretary. This is time for management to consider granting the key administrators their rightful status in certain committees and the hierarchy of authority. Definitely the Executive Secretary of the Conference office should sit in committees rightfully as official member. Whether other administrators and personnel in the Conference office would be granted such status rests with the careful scrutiny of the management.

The rationale behind this recommendation is that parity of status is also a manifestation of the democratic spirit of the MCHK. Many non-pastoral workers are professionals recruited by the Conference. They are dedicated to their work and competent in participating in the decision-making process. The task of non-pastoral and pastoral workers may be different, but they combine efforts to achieve the same goal of the MCHK. So a rightful place for these workers is logical.

It is an unhealthy situation if a staff has many responsibilities but without authority to decide how the job should be done (Moorhead & Griffin, 1989). After all, decisions in the MCHK are usually made collectively. To certain extent, influence of individuals is limited.

c. Summary

The analysis of Committee structure examined problems of the Standing Committee, the various Conference Committees and the Executives' Meeting, a closely related unit to the committee functions. Concerning the Committee structure, four recommendations were given.

First, allowance would be made for the *ex-officio* members in order that their involvement in different committees could be more flexible. Since all *ex-officio* Conference committee members are also members of the Executives' Meeting, internal arrangement can be made in the Executives' Meeting for posting some (not all) *ex-officio* members in different committees. Presumably workloads of the core management team as well as the size of committees could be reduced.

Second, re-grouping of committees according to their functions and the strategic focus of the MCHK is suggested. It is expected that committee discussion could be more focused yet at the same time comprehensive. Also, number of committees could be reduced.

Third, duties and responsibilities of committees must be clearly

defined to focus on the strategic level. The management has to consider minimizing activities oriented committees to streamline the committee structure.

Fourth, it is recommended that at least the Executive Secretary of the Conference office can be granted legitimate status in the Conference committees and/or other levels of authority.

2. Line of Authority and Reporting Relationships

The structure of the MCHK is organized around groups instead of individuals. The MCHK relies on collective efforts for service delivery and decision-making. The organization chart shows the reporting relationships for the major groups. Individuals, on the other hand, may have multiple roles in the organization, and may belong to different groups in different levels of authority. This results in a complicated structure and reporting relationships.

a. Analysis

Almost all organization members of the MCHK would agree that the organization structure is complex. But in fact there are not many layers of management as assumed by the organization members. The following figure illustrates the major layers of management at present.

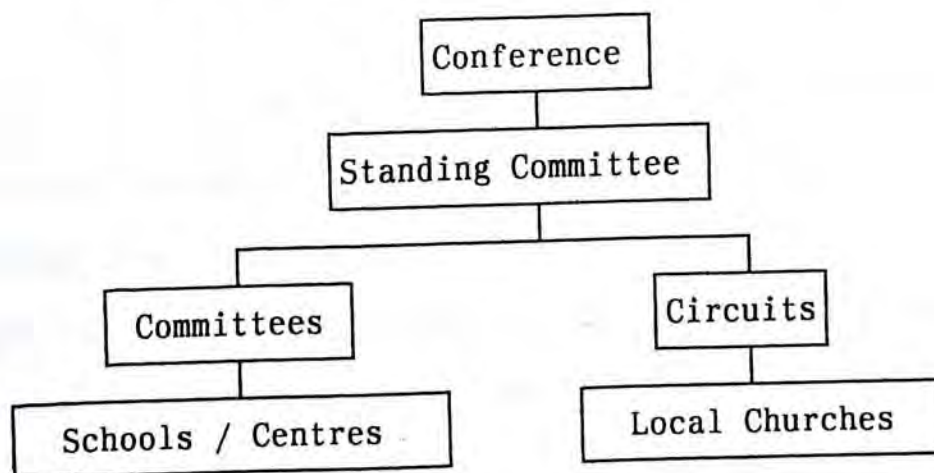


Figure 3. Layers of Management

Schools and centres report to their respective committees. Matters

to be endorsed by the church would be channeled to the Representative Session of the Conference via the Standing Committee. This line of authority is quite clear.

Local churches face a different situation. In principle, they report to the Circuit and are governed by the Circuit and the Circuit Superintendent. However, the relationships are obscure. Since local churches are the major operation units of the MCHK, the reporting relationships and line of authority with regard to the local churches deserve a detailed analysis.

i) Relationships between Local Churches and Circuit

According to the Constitution (Section 37), the relationships between Circuit and local churches is that of reporting and coordinating. The powers and duties described in the Constitution are somewhat obscure. The Circuit should

1. "receives report" from local churches and ministers and persons in charge of local churches in the circuit;
2. "appointing" local preachers, and "recommending" candidates for the ministry;
3. "deal with" a) all matters having to do with the oversight of the local churches within the circuit, and b) application for financial subsidies;
4. "deal with or decide upon" the matters "submitted by" the subsidiaries and committees in the circuit; and
5. "submitting" motions to the Conference.

The wording here suggests a more coordinating and monitoring role for the Circuit. "Deal with", "submit", "recommend" and "receive reports" are wordings allude to a passive role with little or no authority over the subsidiaries. The few things Circuit has ruling authority

include the appointing of local preachers and deciding upon matters "submitted by" subsidiaries. Still, it takes on a rather passive role for decision-making.

Presently the Circuit meetings are reduced from four times a year (as stated in the Constitution) to two times a year. Today the Circuit meetings seem to be confined to the discussion of funding application and recommendation of candidate for ministry. Decisions are not made at this level. The role of the Circuit meeting seems to be consulting, enquiring, and eventually recommending proposals to a higher level, the Standing Committee. Again, the large size of the meeting is a handicap for detailed discussion.

The Circuit Superintendent on the other hand has relatively distinctive duties and power:

1. "directs, encourages, and exhorts" ministers and deacons in his/her circuit to perform their duties;
 2. "supervises" all the works of the local churches in his/her circuit, and is "responsible to ensure" the proper use of the facilities;
 3. "receives" reports from the persons in charge of the local churches and "sees" that the decisions and policies of the Conference are carried out;
 4. "reports to" the conference on the affairs of all the local churches within his/her charge;
 5. "prepares" the quarterly preaching plan in cooperation with other pastoral workers;
 6. "deals with or decides upon" the matters "submitted by" the subsidiaries and committees of the circuit; and
 7. "cares for and reports to the Ministerial Session" the needs of retired ministers who are members of local churches in the circuit.
- Apart from the duties overlaps with the Circuit, the Circuit

Superintendent seems to have relatively narrowly defined duties and authority over the local churches and the ministers. The Superintendent has to direct ministerial workers and care for retired ministerial workers in the circuit. He/she also needs to supervise the works of local churches, monitor the use of facilities, and report to the Conference progress of works done in local churches. Preparation of preaching plan is also a specific duty for the Superintendent.

The common practice in the MCHK is to entrust authority and duties to units or groups of people instead of individuals. The Superintendent, being leader of the Circuit, is personally required to supervise local churches and their ministers. Considering that the Superintendent him/herself is also a minister within the Circuit, it would be rather difficult for him/her to exercise the ruling authority in fear of being charged of favoritism and conflict of interests. Another concern is that the Superintendent may not feel confident and comfortable enough to "supervise" ministers since exertion of individual responsibility and authority is not the usual way of handling problems and conflicts in the MCHK.

In the interviews, some respondent remarked that the Superintendent was unable to perform the task of supervision. Some agreed that the post of Superintendent should be retained because he/she could be "counsellor or trainer" to workers. To some respondents, the most practical duty for the Superintendent seemed to be the preparation of preaching plan.

ii) Relationships between Local Churches and Other Lines of Authority

A higher level of authority is the Standing Committee. As discussed in the previous sections, the over-sized Standing Committee

makes detailed discussion difficult. The Standing Committee usually meets every two to three months and handles organization-wide matters.

With respect to reporting relationships, it is clear that local churches and their ministers ought to submit progress reports to the Circuit and Superintendent. But both Circuit and Superintendent do not rule over the local churches. From the perspective of local churches, at best they will look one level higher to the Standing Committee for approval and endorsement.

Indeed local churches could voice their complaints and make their demands through various channels. Local church ministers and lay representatives are present in the Circuit, Standing Committee and various Conference committees. If they want to make a request, it would not go unheard. But in this case, the sheer presence in committees is crucial to both ministers and laity representing the interests of local churches.

Among all Conference committees, the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee, the Stationing Committee, and the School Education Committee consist of around 17 to 20 members. The size of these committees can well explain the concern of both ministers and laity.

iii) The Executives' Meeting

In addition to the confusion of line of authority, behind the scene there is the Executives' Meeting continually monitoring the operations of local churches. Although the Executives' Meeting is intended to act as a coordinating body in the structure, it exerts significant influence to the organization. In a rather informal manner, information including "news" and "problems" are collected for discussion in the Executives' Meeting.

Members of Executives' Meeting are themselves ministers in charge

of local churches. In the various pastoral meetings and gatherings, situation and operation of other local churches could easily be grasped.

Also, information would flow to the Conference office which is actually a resource centre. The Executive Secretary in particular is resourceful and after screening the in-coming information, the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with other members of the Executives' Meeting, would generate an agenda for discussion in the up-coming Executives' Meeting. Among other affairs, the agenda would cover 1) any issues related to a local church that needed to be regulated or advised, and 2) motions intended to be submitted to the Standing Committee for approval.

Organization members might recognize and agree that the Executives' Meeting is significant to the functioning of the church. But the rationale of the organization structure avoids underscoring the authority of the Executives' Meeting, possibly due to its low ratio of laity representation.

b. Recommendations

With respect to the reporting relationships and the line of authority, two structural changes are recommended to streamline the structure and make vertical information flow smoother.

i) Reporting Relationships for Local Churches

It is recommended that for each unit the reporting relationships has to be clear. Preferably local churches, the more problematic yet important units, should report to and be ruled by the same level of authority.

There are three possible solutions to improve the line of authority and subsequently the reporting relationship. First, the power and

responsibilities of Circuit could be re-emphasized; its ruling authority enhanced. Second, the Executives' Meeting could be positioned as an official superior level of authority governing local churches. Moreover, the Executives' Meeting could be delegated more decision-making authority in order that some issues could be settled at this level. Third, Missions & Pastoral Care Committee could be positioned as an official superior level of authority ruling over local churches.

Adopting the first option will drive ourselves towards the opposite direction of this consultation since it would create more meetings and eventually more positions in the Circuit level. Two sessions a year are definitely unable to tackle the different issues arising from local church level.

The disadvantage of adopting the second option primarily concerns the low proportion of lay representation in the Executives' Meeting. But the *ex-officio* members are also elected personnel. In this sense the democratic spirit of the MCHK is not violated. Furthermore, replacing the Circuit by the Executives' Meeting is in fact a manifestation of the concept of "form follows function". In reality, the Executives' Meeting has been practicing the role of supervising, monitoring and regulating, but in a rather informal manner.

Span of control is another consideration. Putting local churches formally under supervision of the Executives' Meeting actually cannot reduce the Meetings' span of control. In the previous discussion, members of the Executives' Meeting are overloaded with meetings and duties. If the span of control cannot be effectively reduced, the second option is probably not preferred.

The third option involves greater changes in function and role of the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee. Presently major concern of the Committee centers around functional areas across local churches. The

advantage of adopting this option is that the Committee could supervise the functional sub-committees to fit the needs of local churches because in the new model both sub-committees and local churches would report to the Committee their progresses, problems and needs. However, it should be noted that the relationship between the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee and local church is not a rigid superior-subordinate relationship. But rather, the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee would perform a coordinating and supporting function.

Comparing the three options, the first option, i.e. re-emphasizing the power of Circuit, is undesirable because it will generate more meetings instead. Either the second or third options may be accepted. Comparatively speaking, the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee can do a better job because coordination of functional committees and geographic operation units by a single committee can facilitate better resource allocation and effective problem-solving. Also, in line with the decentralization concept, it is desirable to delegate authority to a lower level to supervise the local churches. The Missions & Pastoral Care Committee fits better than the Executives' Meeting. So, the proposed structure would look like:

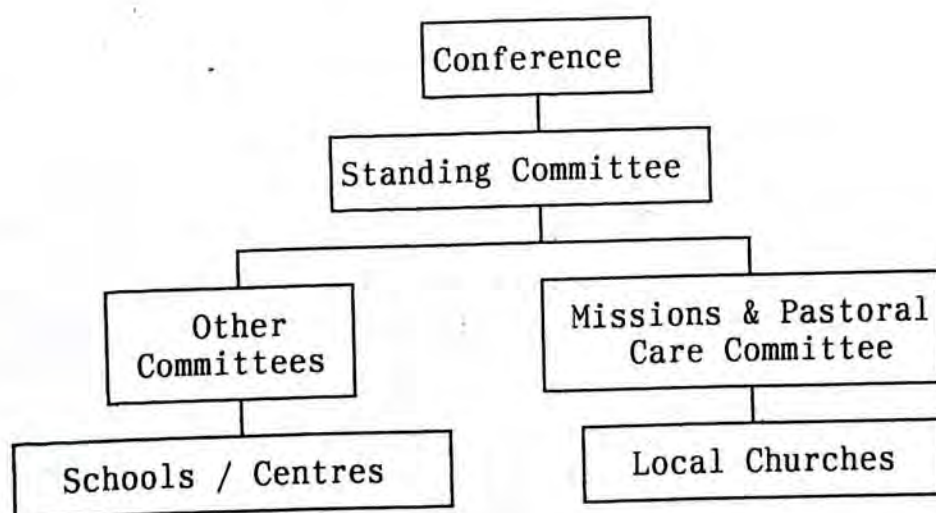


Figure 4. Proposed New Reporting Relationships for Local Churches

ii) The Executives' Meeting and the Standing Committee

The analysis also reveals that the Executives' Meeting in reality plays a very important role in regulating church functions. The Meeting has little decision-making authority and lacks a clear reporting relationship with other units in the MCHK. The agenda discussed in the Executives' Meeting are not formally submitted by other committees or operation units. But virtually every motion submitted to the Standing Committee is discussed by the Executives' Meeting. It serves as an informal layer of management. It is vested with many responsibilities but little authority.

On the other hand, the Standing Committee does have the authority to rule and make decisions. But it is already reiterated that the size of the Committee is a handicap to careful and in-depth discussion. So the Committee has to rely on the Executives' Meeting.

It is therefore suggested that the Executives' Meeting has to be positioned as a formal level in the hierarchy of authority. The proposed model would look like:

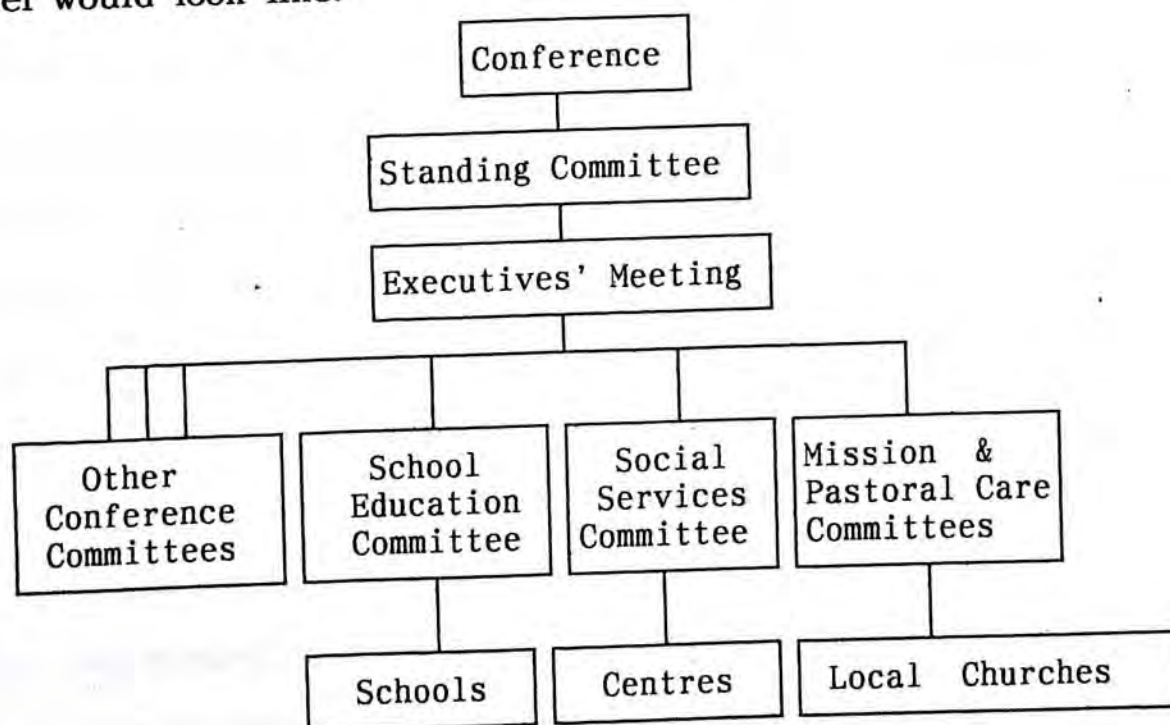


Figure 5. Proposed New Line of Authority

Here, the Executives' Committee oversees all Conference Committees

including the three divisions. The rationale behind this idea is that responsibility for decisions and actions must be given to the people who have the most relevant and timely information or the most appropriate skills. Also, "authority is linked to responsibility because an employee responsible for accomplishing certain results must have the authority to achieve the results." (Moorhead & Griffin, 1989, p. 413) In the case of the MCHK, it is the groups to which authority is vested.

Clearly the Executives' Meeting takes up many responsibilities to regulate and coordinate church functions. It appears that formalizing the position of the Executives' Meeting would create one more layer of management. But in fact it only provides a formal reporting relationship for Conference Committees and reduces opportunities of misunderstanding because it enables detailed discussion and open dialogue. Also, the members may not need to use their other roles and positions in other committees to exert their influence.

At present the members of the Executives' Meeting are confined to the *ex-officio* members of the Standing Committee and the Conference Executive Secretary. Although some *ex-officio* members are lay representatives, the ratio is still unrepresentative according to the usual practice of the church. As one major management layer, the Executives' Meeting could be extended to include more lay representatives and junior ministerial workers, e.g. representatives from deacons, parish workers, and local preachers.

c. Summary

The reporting relationship and line of authority could be improved by putting the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee in place of the Circuit

to supervise local churches. Another major change is to legitimize the Executives' Meeting as a formal hierarchy of authority to guide and govern the Conference Committees more effectively.

D. Analysis of Decision-Making Process

Decision-making is a process of identifying and solving problems (Daft, 1992). A decision integrates the efforts of individuals in the organization and makes their efforts pay off in terms of group or organizational effectiveness. A good decision depends on the individuals' training, their willingness to perform their duties, and their motivation to work hard (Moorhead & Griffin, 1989). Another important element for decision-making is the information available to the decision maker. Information and facts for decision-making includes the alternatives, the likelihood that each outcome will occur, and the value of each outcome relative to the goal (Moorhead & Griffin, 1989). Based on the above understanding of the concept of decision-making, the analysis of decision-making process in the MCHK is rendered.

The survey analysis revealed that pastoral workers generally agreed that the decision-making process was repetitive and inefficient. The complaint was that one needs to pass through various committees in order to seek for an approval. But task and authority differentiation between committees was unclear. So it was still unable to ensure the quality of decision-making. There were chances that decisions made were not for the benefit of the organization and its members.

Major areas of complaints about the decision-making process hovered around financial and human resources management decisions. These are in fact two centralized stream of resources. What seems perplexing to the management is the complexities of problems that custom tailored decisions are required. Human resources issues are sensitive;

lots of personal contacts, negotiation, explanation, and informal discussion are needed before it could be put in the agenda. Although there are proper procedures for solving these problems, clear-cut decision criteria do not exist. In some cases, even if decision criteria do exist, the management has to take into account personal feeling and interpersonal conflicts. Often tailor custom decisions are offered.

Three cases are put forward as examples for analysis: 1) application for candidacy of ministerial works; 2) application for financial subsidy; and 3) stationing. These are areas mentioned by organization members in the interview as being ineffective, repetitive, and frustrating.

1. Analysis

a. Application for Candidacy for Ministerial Work

The recruitment of ministerial workers has to go through careful and meticulous steps because Conference ministers represent the MCHK to preach, care, and administer. Also they are offered life-long office. The recruitment and orientation are important in order to ensure the quality and commitment of staff. This process, however, has become causes of conflict and grievances. The recruitment steps are listed below.

1. An church member expresses wish to join the connexional system and study in seminary; in different occasions the applicant would share the vision with minister in charge of local church AND with other church members;
(qualification for application: baptized and joined the church for not less than three years)
2. Apply to, interviewed and approved by the board of local church;
3. Apply to the Circuit, submit "Letter of Conviction";

4. Interviewed and recommended by the Circuit;
5. Interviewed and approved by the Pastoral Workers' Selection and Training Committee;
6. Approved by the Ministerial Section;
7. Approved by the Representative Section.

Before a person formally submits his/her application, he/she has to go through an informal screening session within the local church to which he/she belonged. Informal, social approval is essential to the application. If consensus could not be obtained the applicant would encounter great difficulties in putting the application in agenda of the board meeting of local church.

An applicant has to obtain approval from:

1. board of local church;
2. Circuit;
3. Pastoral Workers' Selection and Training Committee;
4. Ministerial Session; and
5. Representative Session.

The applicant is required to attend board meeting of local church, Circuit meeting, and the Selection and Training Committee's meeting to read his "Letter of Conviction" and answer queries and questions from attendants. The endorsement of the Ministerial Session (29 attendants in the session held in 1993) and representative Session (114 and 119 attendants in a two day session held in 1993) are for formality sake and rather rubber-stamping. Usually the applicant is not required to answer questions in these two meetings.

Of the three meetings an applicant required to attend, the local church board meeting would be the fundamental and most effective unit in checking a person's suitability in joining the ministry. It renders two advantages.

1. Being a member of local church for some years, the applicant's personality, commitment and subsequently his suitability in joining the ministry would be better understood by fellow members than by people outside the community.
2. Before putting his application in agenda of board meeting, the applicant would have spent much time in communicating his conviction with church members and the church minister. This process would enable the church members and minister to judge his appropriateness, to recognize whether there is any problem, to encourage or discourage the applicant, and to make constructive suggestions to the applicant.

In other words, local church is the unit closest to information source with regard to candidacy application. The local church would have sufficient facts and information to make the decision.

Apparently, taking local church as the major screening body would encounter difficulties of equal weight. In most cases the applicant is long time member of the local church. The church members may feel reluctant to reject his application in fear of hurting the relationships between them. Church is in fact a social entity and harmonious social bond is highly valued in church communities. Members might not be willing to sacrifice this bond of love in exchange for a fair but ruthless rejection. So the church is unwilling to take up the responsibility and the blame, and will feel better off to let a higher level of authority to make the decision.

The next level would be the Circuit which is vested with power of "recommending candidates for the ministry" (Constitution Section 38). The Constitution states that Circuit attendance includes:

1. active ministers, deacons, missionaries, and Conference appointed workers stationed in the Circuit;

2. retired ministers and deacons who are members of local churches of the Circuit;
3. local preachers who are members of local churches of the Circuit;
4. representatives from local churches in the Circuit [could have more than one representative from a local church, depending on the size of church]; and
5. persons entitled to be present as delegates or as observes according to the Constitution and By-laws of the Church.

The Circuit meeting is not of a small size. The attendants are people from churches in the same Circuit, including ministers and lay representatives. Although the Circuit has the duty to recommend candidates, it should be noted that it is basically a coordinating body to facilitate communication and information flow. It appears that application for joining ministerial work has seldom been rejected by the Circuit. Nevertheless, the candidate must read his letter and stand up to the inquiry of Circuit attendants.

Upon approval by the circuit, the application would pass to the Pastoral Workers' Selection and Training Committee at the Conference level. This year the committee has thirteen members, six being ministers and seven lay representatives; *ex officio* members includes the President, Vice President, Secretary, Executive Secretary of the Missions & Pastoral Care Division, Circuit Superintendents, and President and Vice President leaving office.

The responsibilities and duties of the committee include selection of Conference and local church candidates for ministry; decision and arrangement for subsidies, placement, and seminaries; and follow-up the progress of study; etc. As far as the present recruitment process is concerned, this committee is the major screening and decision-making unit at the Conference level.

The candidate has to attend the Committee meeting and again read out his letter of conviction and answer questions from committee members. It should be noted that this committee might not include ministers or lay representatives from the local church to which the candidate belonged. The committee has the rightful authority to make the decision, but the committee members may not know the applicant well; it may lack the information making an appropriate decision.

The recruitment of ministers in the MCHK is somewhat different from recruiting employees in a business organization. Ministers are called, not made, and strictly speaking, not "employed". When an applicant stands up to open inquiry in at least three different meetings attended by ministers and lay people of his/her church and other churches, it is understandable that he/she would feel embarrassed, disgraced and even humiliating if he/she has to answer harsh questions. From the standpoint of the MCHK, ministers are to take up life-long office; the church not only financially supports the minister, she also spiritually supports him/her in all the years to come. So a careful recruitment process is necessary. To make an application pass through several layers would provide the management with an appropriate final decision. But an applicant would see the process from a different perspective. The applicant is a member of the church community. The long process of application "exposes" the applicant to the public. The possibility of open rejection may deter people from submitting applications in the first place.

In addition, letting an application pass through different meetings would not guarantee the best decision. Having too many attendants in the Circuit meeting would hinder an effective examination. And the various meetings only diffuse the responsibilities. Coupled with the concept of collective decision-making, neither a committee/meeting nor an

individual is responsible for a decision if it turns out to be a mistake. Also, the approval from one committee/ meeting somehow compels another committee to endorse the decision and the whole process becomes irreversible. Further, many ministerial workers and lay representatives have multiple roles and positions. This results in an escalating commitment that motivates people to justify their previous decisions (Hellriegel, Slocum & Woodman, 1986).

b. Application for Financial Subsidy

In case of financial difficulty, a local church may apply for financial subsidy from the Conference. The procedure, however, was commented by some pastoral workers as being humiliating and inefficient. In the interview, several pastoral workers pointed out that the application process was complicated and annoying. The application procedures are listed below.

1. The Financial Committee of a local church concludes that application for financial assistance is necessary and apply to the board of local church;
2. Approved by the board of local church;
3. Submission of application form, financial report and budget to the Conference;
4. Approved by the Circuit;
5. Approved by the Finance and Property Management Committee;
6. Approved by the Standing Committee;
7. Approved by the Representative Session.

Apart from internal examination, a local church needs to seek approval from four levels of authority before the funding application could be approved.

The Representative Session is seen as a rubber-stamping body.

The Finance and Property Management Committee would be one level that concentrates on financial affairs. Presently the committee has ten members, five being ministers and five lay members. The duty of the Circuit is to "deal with application for financial subsidy" (Constitution, Section 38). According to the By-laws (Chapter 105, Annex 1), the Circuit is responsible for evaluation and prioritization of fund applications from churches in the circuit for the approval of the Finance and Property Management Committee. In recent years the Circuit meeting usually handles not more than one fund application in a session. Apart from the task of prioritization, the Circuit and the Finance Committee are performing similar functions. Since the Circuit does not have the ruling authority nor a specific area of responsibility, the Circuit meeting is conducted in a way that the local church will be challenged, both broad and specific questions relating to the application will be asked. But specific decision criteria are lacking. After a "hot" debate the circuit will still recommend the application. The circuit not only performs repetitive functions, it also worsens the situation because a higher level an application goes, the more unlikely that it will be rejected.

c. Stationing

Decision-making procedure concerning stationing of pastoral workers is subtle and sensitive. Stationing often causes grievances and complaints from both pastoral workers and local church members. The decision-making procedures include the following steps.

1. Pastoral Concern Group (ad hoc sub-committees of the Circuit, one for each local church) attended by senior representatives of a local church and chaired by the Circuit Superintendent consults opinions of a local church with regard to the performance of their minister and the preference of the church in stationing matters.

2. Circuit Superintendent reports back to the Ministerial Session for discussion.
3. Paralleled to this, ministers informally share their own views concerning future stationing arrangements in the Pastors' meeting (a monthly gathering for mutual support and staff development).
4. Ministerial Session proposes new arrangement to the Stationing Committee. (usual practice: Day 1, 10am-5pm)
5. Stationing Committee discusses the proposal and submit motions to the Standing Committee. (Day 1, 6pm)
5. Approved by the Standing Committee. (Day 2, 3pm)
6. Approved by the Representative Session.

In view of the tight manpower, stationing has long been a sensitive issue. Much communication is needed to: 1) understand the expectations of both ministers and local churches; and 2) inform the concerned parties of the proposed arrangement and convince all parties to accept the arrangements. The role of the Circuit Superintendent appears to be more important in this case.

However, the decision-making process is ambiguous. It seems that the Standing Committee possesses the actual responsibility to decide upon stationing matters. Again, the Representative Session is a rubber stamp.

Among the many steps leading to the final decision, much time is spent in discussion, negotiation, and lobbying because stationing involves personnel positioning that is seen strategic to local churches and important to ministers themselves.

The decision-making process starts with the Pastoral Concern Group chaired by the Circuit Superintendent. To some extent the meeting is a performance appraisal for the minister by church members. However, the Circuit Superintendent does not have the authority in conducting

performance appraisal for ministers. The authority to evaluate ministers, feedback information, command corrective behavior, and follow-up progress is not formally delegated to Circuit Superintendent. The coordinating function of Circuit does not allow Superintendent to exercise such authority. The responsibility of Superintendent rests on a more positive side to "directs, encourages and exhorts" ministerial workers.

Formal discussion, proposal, and approval of stationing arrangement, however, are administered within two days to avoid lobbying. The negative side is that there is little room for feeding back information to local churches. This makes local churches express the strongest will possible in an earlier stage attempting to influence the result. Lay representatives will make their way to be present in the Stationing Committee and Standing Committee to have their voice heard. The communication between Conference, ministers and local churches is much weaker at this stage. It is understandable that some local churches may feel ill-treated and their interests ignored if the arrangement turns out to be undesirable. Listening, explanation and persuasion are insufficient as everything has to be decided in a hurry.

The formal meetings to discuss and approve stationing arrangement at Conference level include the Ministerial Session (29 attendants in 1993), the Standing Committee (41 attendants), and the Stationing Committee (17 attendants). As mentioned above, stationing is often a sensitive issue. Again, the large size of the meetings hinders effective discussion. Few outspoken or influential members may dominate the discussion and inhibits participation of some other less active members. After the meetings the members may feel that they are ill-treated and their interests ignored. Also, the ministers may feel that stationing should be their own decisions and laity participation is over-emphasized.

2. Recommendations

The three examples revealed similar deficiencies in the decision-making process of the MCHK. Several observations are gathered and the following recommendations are made.

a. Layers/Number of Meetings/Committees

For candidacy application and fund application, there are many meetings/committees needed to be passed through in order to gain an approval. It is recommended that responsibility and authority should be assigned to the appropriate unit and should not be diffused to different committees/meetings. Each level of authority that an application passes through must have a clear goal concerning the evaluation of that application. This will avoid having the risk of getting same information and examining same areas by all levels. Advisory function and decision-making authority must be distinguished.

In the case of candidate selection, the personality, ability, conviction, and suitability of the candidate must be examined. The local church, being closest to the candidate, is considered the first scanning unit and would be most qualified to judge whether a candidate is suitable to join the Conference. The Circuit would not perform a better job than the Selection Committee except that different kinds of people would raise questions to the candidate. The Selection Committee does have rather specific area of responsibility concerning candidate selection and arrangement. Therefore the Circuit was superfluous.

Viewed from this perspective, the Circuit is considered redundant. The roles of the Circuit and Superintendent are confusing because they do not have authority to rule and decide but they have responsibility to investigate and evaluate applications. How much effort are they willing

to pay in such pointless work? To what extent and how deep should they examine? The ambiguity of responsibility and goals compel the circuit to endorse every application after a seemingly meticulous examination.

When the application passes to a higher level, same process of examination will be conducted again. But this time a decision will be made. So the decision-making process would be smoother if the Circuit level is cancelled.

In addition, it is suggested that repeated approvals from different levels of authority should be minimized. Final decisions should be left to the lower levels whenever possible. In the case of candidacy application, it is not necessary to have the application go through a series of five meetings. If decentralization is to be implemented and local churches are vested with greater decision-making authority, the management has to trust that they will be capable of making good decisions. The application would be judged by board of local church and the Ministerial Affairs Committee. The Standing Committee would be a rubber-stamp for the decision. It is simply not necessary to submit the application to the Representative Session. Such practice can be applied to other decision-making procedures, the more actual decision-making authority is delegated to lower level of authority, the less involvement is needed for the higher level in decision-making.

b. Size of Meeting

Another factor hinders effective decision-making is the size of meeting or committee. The following table shows the likely effect of group size on several group process dimensions.

Category/Dimension	Group Size		
	2-7 Members	8-12 Members	13-16 Members
◆ Leadership			
1. Demands on leader	low	moderate	high
2. Differences between leaders & members	low	low to moderate	moderate to high
3. Direction by leader	low	low to moderate	moderate to high
◆ Members			
1. Tolerance of direction from leader	low to high	moderate to high	high
2. Domination of group interaction by a few members	low	moderate to high	high
3. Inhibition in participation by ordinary members	low	moderate	high
◆ Group process			
1. Formalization of rules and procedures	low	low to moderate	moderate to high
2. Time required for reaching judgement / decisions	low to moderate	moderate	moderate to high
3. Tendency for subgroups to form within group	low	moderate to high	high

Table 4. Possible Effects of Size of Meeting

Source: Hellriegel, Slocum, & Woodman, 1989, p. 211.

In fact, the size of committees and meetings mentioned in the three examples are quite large. Some meetings even have more than 16 members. In the MCHK, leaders or chairmen of meetings can be pastoral workers or lay representatives. The difference between leaders and members is not as wide in business organizations where leaders and subordinates belong to different hierarchy of authority. According to the table cited above, the direction of and demands on leader for a large group are relatively high, especially when such settings are more likely to be dominated by few outspoken or influential members. The situation worsens as many members are in a hurry and unable to commit in preparation and investigation. No wonder the decision-making process in

the MCHK is time-consuming but ineffective.

It is suggested that for those meetings/committees intended for actual decision-making, upper limit for group size can be restricted to fourteen to sixteen people. For those rubber-stamping committees, a larger size can be tolerated. The management must first decide which level of authority is suitable for making certain decisions and then adjust the size to facilitate an effective process.

c. Responsibility and Authority

Every decision will bring about a consequence and actions that affect both individuals and the whole organization. Unless someone or some committee is responsible for the consequence, the decision-making process is in danger of falling in a series of routines.

In line with the concept of decentralization, the management must trust that local churches or the operation units concerned are capable of deciding whether an application is justifiable. In fact the best place where decision is made successfully would be the unit closest to the information source. Local churches have to take up the primary responsibility of making judgements.

For example, if a person intends to apply for ministerial candidacy, the board and/or the minister of his local church would examine his suitability. Decision-making authority should be accompanied by a responsibility for that decision. In order that lower levels of authority would carefully exercise their authority on decision-making, their responsibilities must be emphasized as well. So upon approval, the local church would act as recommending body. Chairman of the board and/or the minister may be required to go for the meetings the applicant required to attend and act as recommending body to defend his/her application.

The rationale here is that in boards and committees, decisions are made by consensus; this diffuses responsibility and, if the decision is wrong, diffuses blame, too. Since everyone is involved but no one is responsible for the consequence, there is a tendency to rationalize failure. Also, they will find that they are better off letting someone else make the decisions. For the different units involved in the decision-making process, it is preferable to assign each unit concerned a specific area of responsibility for decision-making. For example, if the applicant has to apply to and interviewed by both local church board, and Pastoral Selection and Training Committee, the two units would be responsible for judging a different aspect of the applicant's suitability. Local church board may decide whether the applicant's personality, commitment, church and personal background, etc. are recommendable. The Pastoral Selection and Training Committee, being less familiar with the applicant, would be responsible for judging the applicant's doctrinal background, attitude towards ministry, and the appropriate arrangement suitable for the training.

Above all, each unit would be assigned an area of responsibility and decision-making authority. They have to be specific so that all units will have a goal for decision-making and be responsible for the action.

The device has another advantage. The check and balance mechanism can be enhanced even though some decision-making layers are cancelled. To have a clear scope of responsibility is in fact beneficial to the management because basing on the clear and even measurable criteria, the decision and performance of a unit could then be evaluated.

3. Summary

The discussion of decision-making process of the MCHK uncovered several areas of deficiencies to be improved. Three suggestions are

made. First, for a smooth and efficient decision-making process, advisory role and authority must be differentiated. And some layers may be cancelled to streamline the process. In the above examples, the Circuit was one possible layer to be deleted from the decision-making process.

Second, since collective decision-making will more likely diffuse responsibility, discussion and consideration in a meeting would be loosely managed. In order to facilitate an effective decision-making process, number of attendants in a meeting has to be limited. An upper limit of 14-16 members is recommended for better interaction and discussion.

Third, responsibility must be assigned to some member/meeting to look into the details of a matter to be discussed. For example, in the case of financial subsidy, the minister and/or board chairman of the local church would be responsible for the application and would attend the necessary meetings to explain and defend the application. Also, scope of responsibilities for each decision-making layer should be specified so that redundant work could be minimized.

E. Relationship between Conference and Local Churches

It was revealed in the first data feedback analysis that relationships between Conference and local churches was rather remote and sometimes even being antagonistic. The democratic spirit with extensive laity participation failed to promote a closer relationship. The following analysis first studied the formal relationships between the two and then examined the causes of the unfavorable formal and subsequently informal relationships.

1. Analysis

The formal relationships between the Conference and local churches can be seen more clearly in the following figure showing

resources/ activities flow between conference and local churches.

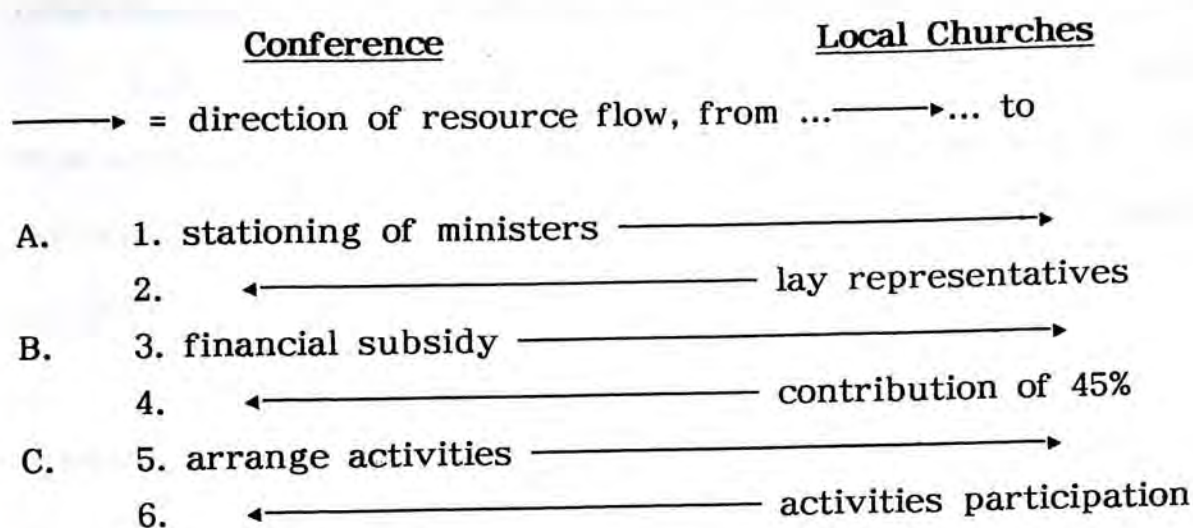


Figure 6. Relationships between Conference and Local Churches

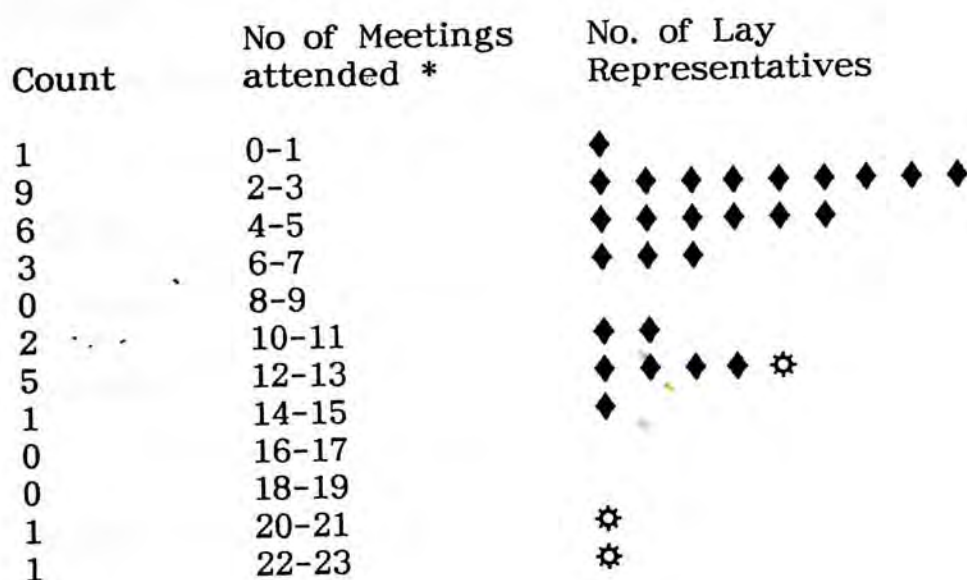
The formal relationships between Conference and local churches are built on three dimensions, i.e. (A) human resources allocation (stationing and lay representation), (B) financial resources allocation (financial subsidy and contribution), and (C) activities participation.

The Conference stations ministers in local churches, grants financial subsidies to local churches, and arranges activities for local churches. Local churches contribute 45% of their three major offering items to Conference, send lay representatives to participate in higher decision-making layers, and participate (or encourage members to participate) in Conference arranged activities.

In recent years, it is evident that there are grievances, conflicts and complaints with regard to stationing, fund application and contribution. In the interview, a few respondents remarked that both local churches and sometimes even ministers working on behalf of their interests may feel being over-controlled by the Conference. The tight control infringes on the discretion needed for local churches to perform the church functions. In the interview, a few pastoral workers from smaller churches even suspected the Conference of favoritism.

Indeed the conflicts over scarce resources have damaged the relationships between Conference and local churches.

Lay representatives involving in Conference level is a demonstration of the democratic spirit. However, degree of involvement differs among representatives. The following histogram illustrates the situation.



◆ = lay representatives in Standing Committee
 ⊛ = lay *ex-officio* members in Standing Committee

Total = 29 persons

* including sub-committees, boards of schools and social service centres.

Figure 7. Lay Participation in Conference Committees

The histogram indicates two clusters and two peaks, one being 2-3 meetings and the other 12-13 meetings. Many representatives attend less than five meetings at conference level. However, the other peak indicates that some representatives have much greater involvement. The uneven distribution shows that some lay representatives are actively participating in Conference decision-making work. But the majority is less active.

Although the pattern itself does not indicate a negative

consequence, but the management should be alert to the uneven distribution. If lay participation is seen as a channel to enhance mutual understanding and relationships, the involvement pattern indeed signals a possible deficiency. Is the majority too green to be involved in many other committees? Are they being too passive and indifferent to conference affairs? Will their participation be inhibited by a few outspoken and influential people? These issues may all jeopardize the relationships between Conference and laity.

On the other hand, in face of tight manpower, the local churches may not appreciate their lay leaders joining the Conference activities. Therefore, lay participation may not be a favorable factor in improving relationships.

Various activities are arranged by Conference committees intending to provide service to local churches in areas they feel weaker and in need of outside assistance. The response, according to the survey analysis, was diverse. Some remarked that the activities could really help the church members. But some others criticized that most activities were redundant and futile, and in reality an exploitation of manpower from local churches.

The three dimensions (i.e. human and financial resources, and authority) discussed manifest some deficiencies which fails to foster a healthy relationship between Conference and local church. As the formal relationship fails to work, it will be more difficult for the MCHK to cultivate the informal relationship.

Not only is the vertical linkage dissatisfactory, the horizontal linkage is weak as well. According to the comments from several pastoral workers in the interview, relationships among local churches were remote. In principle, the connexional system unites pastoral workers together, the circuit system unites local churches of the same circuit,

and lay participation helps people from different churches getting to know each other better. However, it seems that all units work like independent entity, if not being hostile to each other. So the Conference, being the leader, would certainly feel helpless and distressed.

2. Recommendations

A good informal intra-organization relationship implies that there will be mutual understanding and support, willingness to participate, satisfaction with the degree of control, and commitment in striving for the same goal. The above analysis revealed that formal relationships between Conference and local churches are not satisfactory. It follows that informal relationships are affected.

To improve the relationships, whether formal or informal, all three dimensions must be tackled. These include the human resources allocation, financial resources allocation, and activities arrangement.

Concerning human resources allocation, the stationing system is one area the management of MCHK wants to remain unchanged. Not much can be done in this respect unless more ministerial workers can be recruited and the system revised to allow for greater flexibility.

Lay representation is one aspect the management could look into. The proposed structural change suggests an expansion of lay representation in the Executives' Meeting for decision-making. This would definitely be helpful in improving the communication between local churches and Conference. On the other hand, the overall reduction of size of committees and meetings would lower the degree of lay participation. But acting as a passive listener in a large committee would neither improve the relationships between the two parties.

With regard to financial resources allocation, the contribution arrangement will not be changed in the near future. Recently the

Strategic Development Committee has been working hard to encourage local churches to face the issue and find ways to improve their financial situation so that the 45% target could be reached.

The section on decision-making process has suggested ways to improve the application procedures. It is expected that an efficient process will facilitate a better relationship as ill-feelings and grievances could be minimized.

Conference activity is one aspect that more effort can be paid to seek for improvement. In face of tight manpower, activities would be arranged upon request and on demand. The section on organization structure suggests that the various sub-committees (e.g. youth work, teenage work, Sunday School, etc.) working on different church functions and activities can be merged into one or few major committees. Then the sub-committees will not need to plan for activities to prove the importance of their existence. After all, owing to the time constraints, lay members may actually be reluctant to join the activities.

The intention of the Conference and her committees in arranging activities is for the benefit of local churches. In view of the tight manpower of both pastoral workers and lay leaders, however, there must be some trade-off. Also in line with the concept of decentralization, Conference arranged activities can be minimized.

On the other hand, a better horizontal linkage could be beneficial to the vertical linkage as well. According to the previous discussion, the Circuit does not have much authority. The responsibility of the Circuit can actually be re-defined and let it function as a real coordinating body. Two to three circuits or other renamed bodies (Hong Kong-Kowloon, or Hong Kong-Kowloon-New Territories) can be established. Each circuit unites all functional units within the constituency. These include local churches, chapels, social service centres, and schools. Ministers,

deacons, parish workers, lay preachers within the same circuit are rightful circuit members. This is akin to the present Parish Coordination Committee that attempts to coordinate the three integrative functions and plan for strategic development. This concept can be combined with the proposed new Circuit model.

Circuit Superintendent can be elected from within by the members. The circuit meets twice a year. The meeting would not be task- or problem-oriented since it does not possess ruling authority. Rather, the meeting would focus on sharing progresses, difficulties and needs of each unit to enhance mutual support among churches. Also, limited activities for the circuit could be arranged.

Organization-wide activities have to be minimized in the near future. The relationships between Conference and local churches will not have breakthrough if the key issues cannot be handled. However, the pastoral workers and lay representatives, acting as middlemen between the two sides, would be able to help deliver the expectations and needs of both sides so that misunderstanding and ill-feeling can be avoided. Here, the Conference and leaders of the Conference have to take up the responsibility to spend time in building up a more cohesive team, first within pastoral workers, then extend to lay representatives.

3. Summary

It is indeed not easy to improve the relationships between Conference and local churches in view of the constraints and difficulties. Among the three dimensions affecting the relationships, activity is one area comparatively easy to be dealt with. The Circuit has to focus on enhancing horizontal linkage and circuit activities could foster intra-organization relationships. Both stationing system and contribution

system are not to be changed in the near future. So the improvement is limited.

IV. Conclusion

The diagnosis for the three problem areas, i.e. the structure, the decision-making process, and the relationships between Conference and local churches uncovered the causes for the deficiencies. Recommendations for correction were provided for the management. Major changes concerning the organization structure and processes involved the formalization of the position of Executives' Meeting, the restructuring of Conference Committees, the arrangement of *ex-officio* members' involvement in committees and meetings, and the re-definition of the role of Circuit. Changes in organization structure inevitably affect and improve the decision-making process and intra-organizational relationships.

CHAPTER SIX

PROPOSED CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW

I. Introduction

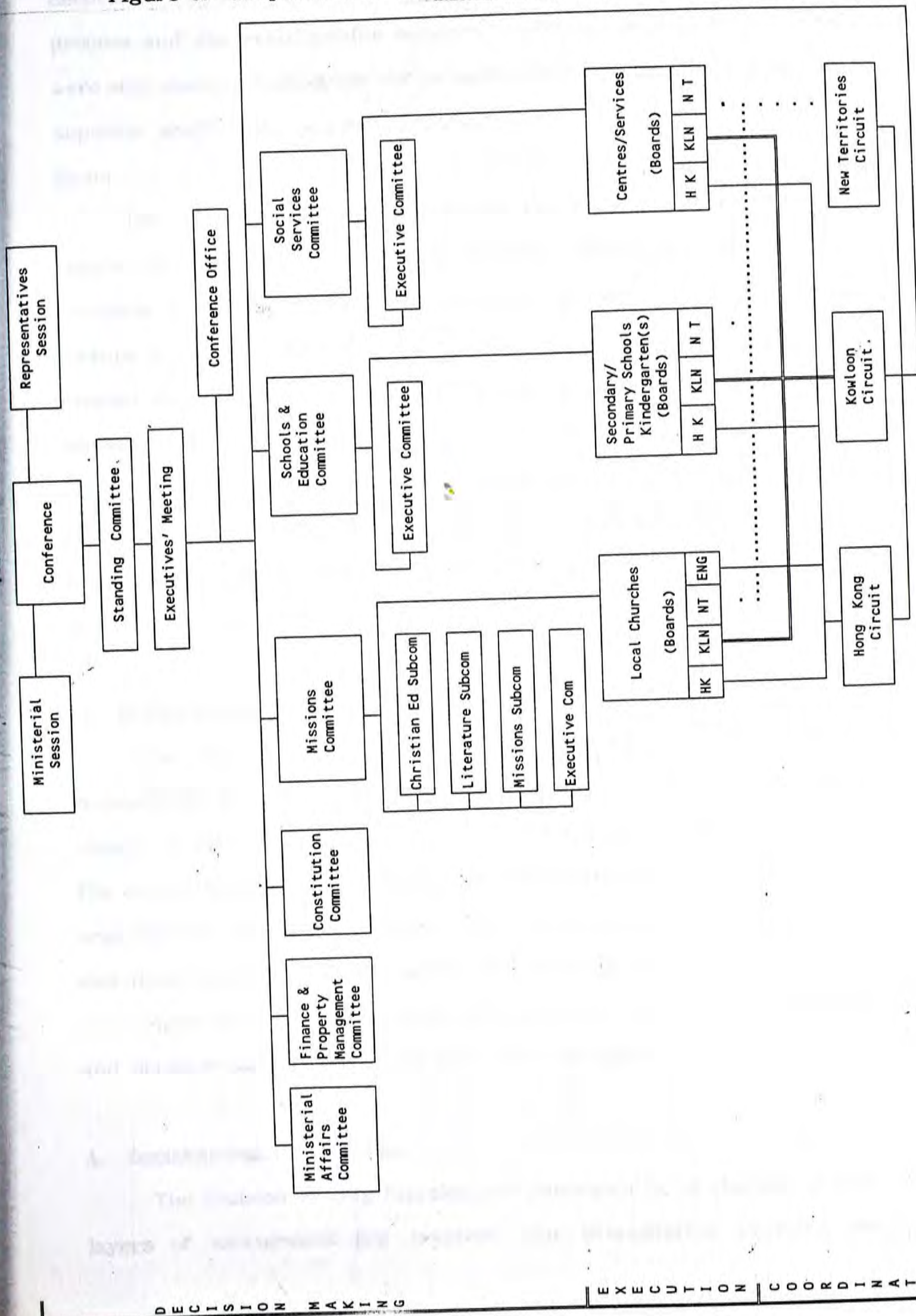
The organization analysis of the MCHK uncovered a number of deficiencies and areas for improvement. The organization structure, the decision-making process, and the relationships between Conference and local churches were examined. Ways for improving the situation were suggested.

The recommendations put forward in the previous chapter were made in response to the problems arisen. Radical organizational restructuring is not suggested although some changes in the organization structure and processes were provided. The advantage is that the organization will not be shaken up and both management and church members can more easily implement and adapt to the changes.

Before feedbacking the analysis result and recommendations to the management, an overview of the suggested corrective actions was given. The recommendations on different issues were integrated into a holistic picture. In fact the recommended corrective actions were inter-related.

Since the diagnostic work hovered around the organization structure and processes, this chapter also used the organization structure as backbone to present a comprehensive picture of the proposed changes suggested by the consultant. Figure 7 on the following page shows the proposed new organization structure of the MCHK.

Figure 8. Proposed New Organization Structure of the MCHK



Recommendations concerning two related issues (i.e. the decision-making process and the relationships between Conference and local churches) were also discussed alongside the presentation on organization structure. Separate sections on recommendations to these two aspects will not be given.

The focus of this chapter was on the proposed changes in the future. The recommendations were basically directional, but concrete examples and suggestions were provided as well. A comprehensive picture would help the management fathom the possible solutions to the present deficiencies. The management can also give feedback to the consultant their opinions concerning the diagnosis and recommendations.

It should be noted that the presentation here presumed that corrective actions would be taken by the management. The description below illustrated the components of MCHK, their functions and inter-relationships under the new model.

II. Organization Structure

The proposed structural changes involves different levels of management. Even though some layers may not have changes but a change in one layer of management will inevitably affect other layers. The implications would be discussed. Description of the proposed new organization structure included the decision-making function, the execution function, and the coordination function.

Apart from the organization structure, the reporting relationships and decision-making procedure were also presented.

A. Decision-Making Function

The decision-making function will undergo a lot of changes and all layers of management are involved. Our presentation included the

Conference, the Standing Committee, the Executives' Committee, the Conference Office, and the Conference Committees.

1. Conference

The Representative Session is a *de factor* annual general meeting to fulfil the requirements of the Corporation Ordinance. Presently an annual meeting of the Session will take one whole day plus an evening. Almost all organization-wide issues must be approved by the Session. Another function for the long session is to record all major decisions at Conference level in the minutes of the Session.

To make the MCHK function efficiently, more decision-making authority must be vested to lower levels of authority. A better representation in the Standing Committee will be sufficient for decision-making. If the Standing Committee is to take up more decision-making authority, then major items approved by the Standing Committee may be attached to the agenda/minutes of the Session as reports of the Committees, appendices, or annexes for the reference of the congregation. By doing so, the record would still be comprehensive. But the Session would become brief. It is unnecessary for the Representative Session to approve every motion again. And it is pointless to let the Conference committees and Executives' Meeting prepare for the whole year all kinds of motions just for rubber-stamping of the Session. A meeting of more than one hundred attendants can hardly enter into any meaningful discussion.

The Ministerial Session is a heritage of the MCHK and its role may remain unchanged. It will remain as the highest governing body for ministers. But the actual authority in evaluating ministerial performance

and stationing would pass to the Ministerial Affairs Committee discussed below. The Ministerial Session remains to be a rather rubber-stamping body.

2. Standing Committee

The Standing Committee is subordinate to the Conference and governs the Executives' Meeting. Some of the motions previously approved by the Representative Session may be settled at the Standing Committee. For example, application of ministerial candidacy could be approved by local church, Ministerial Affairs Committee, and finally the Standing Committee. It is not necessary for application to go to any higher levels. Details of decisions may be submitted to the Conference and attached to agenda or minutes of Ministerial or Representative Session as reports or appendices. Second approval by the Conference can be avoided.

Committee meeting may be convened every three to four months. Basically the present composition of the Standing Committee is already representative. But the management may consider inviting local church parish preachers to attend the Committee. If local church parish preachers are not legitimate MCHK members, they may still be observers to the Committee. Unlike the Representative Session, lay representatives would be confined to a maximum of two representatives for one local church.

3. Executives' Meeting

The works and functions of the Executives' Meeting will be formalized under the new structure. The Meeting is subordinate to the Standing Committee. It is the major hierarchy of authority for operational decisions at the Conference level and regulation of different

church functions. The Meeting directly oversees the Conference office and the Conference committees. In order to administer and coordinate more effectively, the Meeting can be convened every one to two months.

Members of the Executives' Meeting will include members of the existing Executives' Meeting, i.e. the President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer, the Conference Executive Secretary, the Executive Secretaries of the Missions, School Education, and Social Services Committees, and the out-going President and Vice-president. There will be 8 to 10 members in total. Circuit Superintendents are excluded from the Meeting. Instead, new members will be invited:

1. 1 or 2 representatives from deacons and Conference parish workers;
2. 1 or 2 representatives from local church parish workers;
3. 1 or 2 lay representatives from the Standing Committee;
4. Chairmen of other Conference committees (depending on the importance of the Committee as perceived by management. For example, chairman of the Ministerial Affairs Committee may be eligible member but not the chairman of the Constitution Committee).

Total members of the Executives' Meeting ranges from 14 to 16. The upper limit would be sixteen members in order to advance an effective discussion in the meeting. Involvement of junior pastoral workers in the decision-making process is encouraged. This would cultivate a better understanding between the senior and junior workers and this is also a learning process for the junior staff. The ratio of ministerial workers (including parish workers) to lay representatives would more or less be equal.

The Executives' Meeting, also being a higher level of management, differentiates itself from the Standing Committee in terms of the scope

of responsibilities and duties. The Executives' Meeting receives report from the Conference Committees and makes decisions on operational matters. With regard to more important organization-wide matters, direction and strategy modification, the Executives' Meeting would examine the motions and submit to the Standing Committee for approval.

4. Conference Office and Conference Executive Secretary

The diagnosis is not focused on the work of the Conference office and its staff. But it should be reminded that the Conference office has to take on a linking role that serves as a bridge between interacting groups/ committees. (Moorhead & Griffin, 1989).

The only recommendation made in relation to the Conference office concerns the status and authority of the Executive Secretary (and/or other Divisional Executive Secretaries). Considering the duties and responsibilities of the Executive Secretary, she can be appointed as rightful (or even *ex-officio*) member of the Executives' Meeting, and some if not all Conference Committees. The Executive Secretary, being chief administrator of the Conference, would directly report to the President or his delegate and the Conference Office to the Executives' Meeting.

5. Conference Committee

The committee structure will undergo some changes under the proposed model. The changes mainly involve: 1) re-grouping; 2) involvement of the *ex-officio* members; and 3) responsibility and duties of committees.

a. Re-grouping of Committees

The management has to decide upon the function and strategic focus of the church and the frequency of Committee meeting in order to

set up the new groupings of the functional committees and sub-committees.

The Constitution Committee and the Finance & Property Management Committee have specific functions and scope of responsibilities. They may remain unchanged. However, there is no need to have sub-committees for these two committees. Works done by the Salary Sub-committee of the Finance & Property Management Committee may be grouped under the Ministerial Affairs Committee described below.

The Stationing Committee, Pastoral Workers' Selection and Training Committee, Local Preachers Committee, and the Salary Sub-committee of the Finance and Property Management Committee all dealt with human resource issues. These committees usually convened meetings one to several meetings a year. The four committees can be merged into a single committee handling human resource matters; it may be called Ministerial Affairs Committee. Basically matters concerning the pastoral workers can be discussed in this committee. The newly established Ministerial Affairs Committee takes up the responsibility of settling complaints, grievances or opinions from pastoral workers. Probably three to four sessions a year would be sufficient.

Among the three divisional committees, only the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee will be re-organized. The functional sub-committees may be re-grouped into three sub-committees. For example,

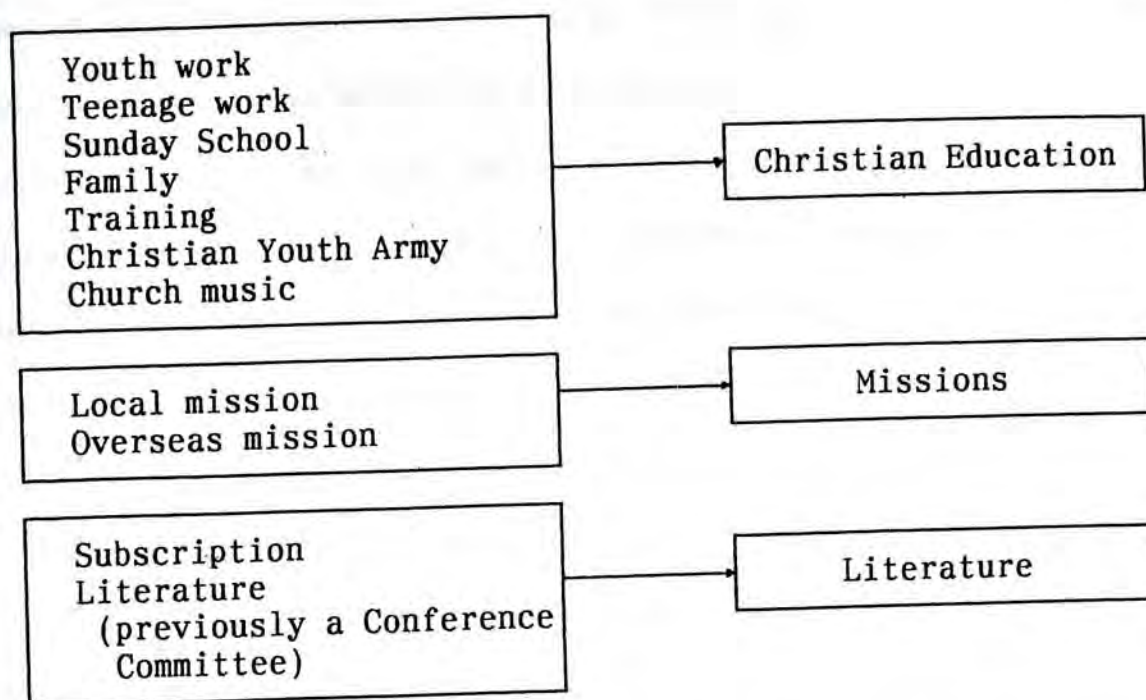


Figure 9. Sub-committee Re-Grouping for the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee

Agenda of each committee may then include more items, but putting related issues in one committee would be able to reduce paperwork, misunderstanding, and eventually total number of meetings. Besides, the committees should take note to concentrate their works on coordination, strategy formulation, and advising. This would give the functional activities of the MCHK better focuses.

In addition to the three new sub-committees that report to the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee, all local churches would report to the Committee as well. Matters relating to preaching and administering of individual churches are coordinated by the Missions & Pastoral Care Committee. So, from now on the Committee will deal with the major church function, that is preaching, caring and administering. Human resources matters will not be under the jurisdiction of the Committee. In this case, the Committee may be renamed as Missions Committee.

The Missions Committee oversees both local churches and the three functional committees. It would be able to coordinate activities and functions organized by the sub-committees to see whether there will be

overflow of activities and whether local churches are in need of such functions. The committee would regulate church-wide activities, ensuring that there will not be too many activities drawing workers and participants from the same pool. The Committee has the authority to reject an activity that is considered unsuitable at the circumstances. But it is suggested if in cases both local church and Conference committee have plans to organize an activity, the local church would have the priority and the Conference committee may simply cancel the plan and let the local church continue on the project.

Each year the Missions Committee would convene two to three meetings for the local churches to report their works, progress, problems, and needs. It is the task of Missions Committee to supervise and regulate works done in local churches.

b. *Ex-officio* Members

It is suggested that involvement of *ex-officio* members in Conference committees would be made flexible. Each year the *ex-officio* members may arrange among themselves who is going to sit in which committee. The management may decide whether such arrangement has to be approved by the Executives' Meeting.

Superintendents are not counted as *ex-officio* members any more because under the new structure, Circuit is purely a coordinating body; Circuit Superintendent is elected within the Circuit and does not have ruling authority. Therefore it is not necessary to include Superintendents as *ex-officio* members.

Guidelines for member involvement could be laid down by the management. Special attention should be paid to the involvement of the *ex-officio* members. Firstly, the management must evaluate the significance of the committees to church functioning, and decide the

relative importance of each committee. Secondly, in accordance with the strategic focus of the MCHK, minimum number of *ex-officio* members required for a Conference committee could be decided. Whether maximum number should be decided is at the discretion of management. In the case of *ex-officio* members' involvement, an upper limit would imply the inclusion of President, Vice-president, the Secretary, and some other members. It is not difficult for the committee to satisfy this requirement, but the workload of the members still will not be reduced.

In rare cases, committees may request the attendance of certain *ex-officio* members such as the President. But this practice would not be encouraged. It is recommended that for most Conference committees three pastoral workers or five *ex-officio* members in total would be the upper limit.

For example, the management may consider the Ministerial Affairs Committee more important than other Committees in the near future because human resource matters appear to be controversial and problematic in recent years. Then the President, Vice-president, and the Secretary may all need to attend the Committee meeting.

Committees and sub-committees within each Conference Committee need to have only one to two *ex-officio* members. With regard to the Schools Education Committee, boards of directors of schools may have higher autonomy. Comparatively speaking, less assistance and guidance is needed. So, two *ex-officio* members are the upper limit.

In addition, even though the divisional Executive Secretary is supposed to be responsible for the operation of his/her constituency, he/she is not required to act as *ex-officio* member for all boards of directors. Other ministerial workers from the Executives' Meeting or the Standing Committee could be assigned to sit in the boards of directors.

Whether a committee meeting requires more than one *ex-officio*

member depends on the importance of that meeting as perceived by management. The following table gives a proposed scenario of their involvement.

Committees	President	Vice-Pres.	Secretary	Treasurer	E S Missions	E S School	E S Soc Ser	E S Conf	TOTAL
1 Constitution	Y	Y						Y	3
2 Finance & Property Mgmt			Y	Y				Y	3
3 Ministerial Affairs	Y	Y	Y					Y	4
4 Missions	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y	4
a Executive Com			Y		Y			Y	3
b Christian Ed				Y	Y	Y			3
c Literature				Y	Y				2
d Missions	Y								2
e Local church	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y	4
5 School Education	Y					Y		Y	4
a Executive Com						Y			1
b 13 school boards	3	1	3	1	1	6	2	1	18
6 Social Service		Y	Y				Y	Y	4
a Executive Com							Y		4
b 9 centre boards	2	1	2	1	1		5		13
TOTAL	11	7	11	5	7	9	9	9	

Table 5. Proposed Committee Involvement of *ex-officio* Members

The example cited above demonstrated how *ex-officio* members can arrange their involvement in Conference committees and sub-committees. It is evident that the *ex-officio* members will reduce their workload significantly. Some committees may be regarded more important or more strategic in the near future, or matters to be discussed in those committees are usually more subtle, then more *ex-officio* members are needed in the committees. For example, Ministerial Affairs, Missions, and Local Church Committees may need to have more *ex-officio* members. For

the other Committees, fewer *ex-officio* members are needed. The management has to trust that other ministerial workers and also the lay representatives are competent or can be trained to perform the task.

c. Size of Committee

To make a committee discussion efficient, number of members in the committee is also an important factor to be noted. Presently most Conference committees have a large group of people representing all sectors of the MCHK. Although the committees are representative, they are inefficient. So the management has to limit the size not to exceed the range of 14-16 members. The proposed change suggests a reduction of *ex-officio* members to make room for other pastoral workers and lay representatives. It is also expected that the overall size of Conference committees would be reduced.

d. Duties and Responsibilities

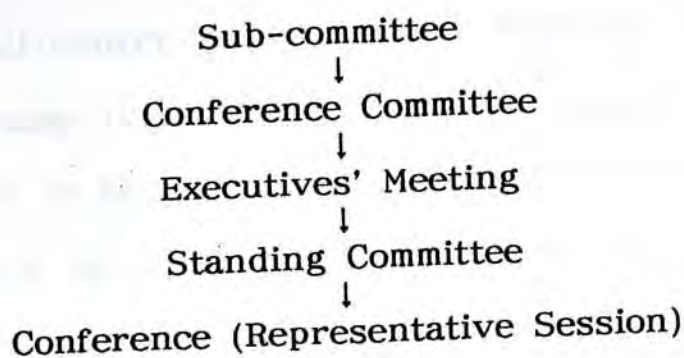
It should be reminded that Conference committees are positioned on the decision-making dimension. Their tasks include planning, advising, reviewing, and decision-making for organization-wide affairs. However, the sub-committees of the Missions Committees are more problematic. Previously the eleven sub-committees all attempted to arrange different activities and functions to demonstrate their worthiness. Those are "good works" but not necessarily fit the present situation of the MCHK. The proposed model suggests a more focused approach. For example, the Christian Education Committee is an amalgamation of seven sub-committees. In the future, not all functions will be touched on in one single year. So each year the committee would evaluate the situation of the MCHK and make plans for that year to focus on one or two aspects. If the committee finds that certain activities have to be arranged for the

congregation, plans are to be submitted to the Conference office which coordinates activities of different units. The Conference office may feedback opinion to the committee after checking the overall schedule and plans of the MCHK. Sometimes ad hoc committees may be set up to pursue a specific issue or perform some extraordinary functions, but each year the management (possibly the Executives' Meeting) would make evaluation and decide whether the ad hoc committee would continue its activities.

The ministerial workers are the primary body for service delivery. Although collective decision-making is the practice and tradition of the MCHK, it is recommended that among the pastoral workers individual responsibility is to be specified to avoid diffusion of responsibility. For example, in each Conference committee where there are several pastoral workers acting as members, one of the pastoral workers would be assigned the duty of monitoring or coordination. The person is preferably not *ex-officio* member of the Standing Committee. Other pastors, deacons, or parish workers of the Standing Committee may take up this responsibility to monitor the committee progress constantly and assist the committee whenever needed. The sub-committees in particular need this kind of worker who practically involves in or concerns about the committee work. When responsibilities are vested to other pastoral workers, the *ex-officio* members and even the Executive Secretary will be able to reduce their actual workload.

6. Reporting Relationships

The organization structure of MCHK is organized around groups, so the organization chart is useful in showing the reporting relationships for the different groups in the decision-making dimension. The reporting relationships would be:



↓ = reporting to

Figure 10. Reporting Relationships for Committees

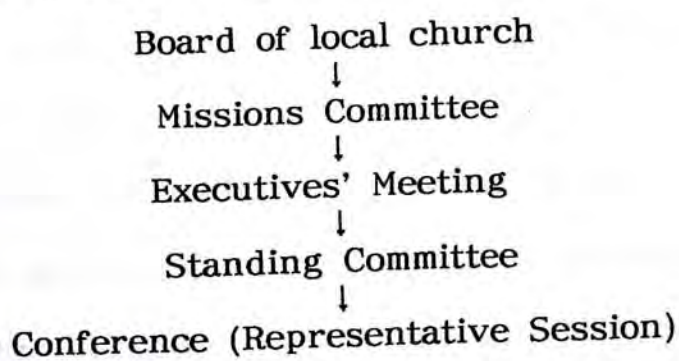
The relationship is self-explanatory in the organization chart.

B. Execution Function

The execution function consists of local churches, schools, and social service centres. These are operation units which directly interact with service recipients. The roles and functions of these units remain unchanged. What requires clarification is their reporting relationships.

With regard to the reporting relationships, schools and centres are less problematic and self-explanatory in the organization chart. But the reporting relationships of local churches to the higher levels of authority need more clarification.

With regard to the preaching function, the reporting relationship for local church is illustrated as follows:

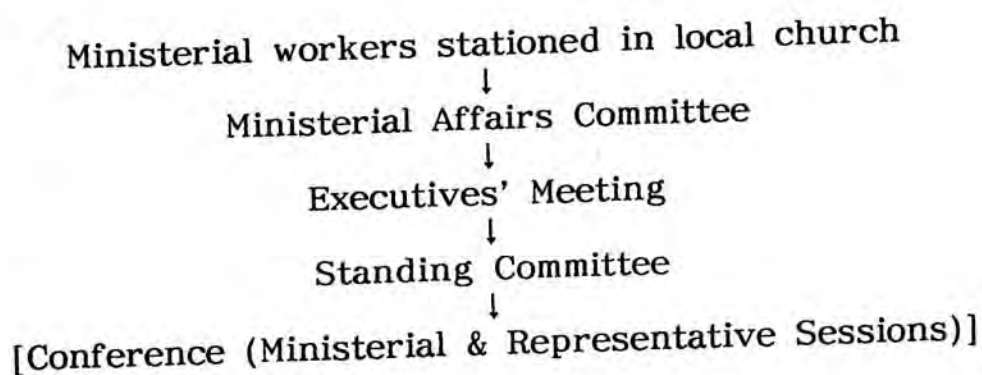


↓ = reporting to

Figure 11. Reporting Relationships for Local Churches

Presently the local church reports to the Standing Committee. But in reality the reporting relationship is rather obscure especially when Circuit is involved. In the future, local churches will directly report to and be supervised by the Missions Committee. It is suggested that periodic meeting (e.g. two to three times a year) would be held to let the local churches report orally their works and plans.

Although ministerial workers are stationed by Conference to the local churches, they are acting on behalf of the interests of their local churches. Considering that human resources matters are subtle and complicated, a special note is needed here because reporting relationships of ministerial workers do not follow that of the churches.



↓ = reporting to

Figure 12. Reporting Relationships for Ministerial Workers

Ministerial workers would report to the Ministerial Affairs Committee and are supervised by the Chairman or his delegate(s). In most cases the chairman is also President of Conference.

It is suggested that the Standing Committee (via the Ministerial Affairs Committee) may settle some of the matters concerning ministerial affairs. Some examples include performance appraisal presently conducted by the Ministerial Session, vacation application, and salary arrangement for seminarians presently decided by the Ministerial Session. The Ministerial Session would decide upon the ordination of deacons and

pastors. Above all, the Ministerial Session is relatively a rubber-stamping body. In line with the decentralization concept, authority would be vested to the lower levels of authority.

C. Coordination Function

The coordination dimension may have two to three Circuits or other renamed bodies, i.e. Hong Kong, Kowloon, and/or the New Territories Circuits. If a group has more than forty to fifty members, it would be necessary to split into two. Here, three circuits are assumed.

Although Circuits are remained, the roles and functions of Circuit and Circuit Superintendent are re-defined. Parish Coordination Committee will be merged into the Circuit. Basically both Circuit and Circuit Superintendent are purely coordinating body/personnel. Therefore they are not involved in the decision-making hierarchy.

A Circuit consists of local churches, chapels, schools, and social services centres within the same circuit constituency. Each year the operation units within the same circuit would elect their Circuit Superintendent. All pastoral workers, principal of schools, director of social services centres of the circuit are eligible candidates. Pastoral workers may include Conference pastors, deacons, missionaries, retired ministerial workers, local preachers, parish preachers and even local church parish preachers.

The Superintendent who reports to the Executives' Meeting, would take on a coordinating role to enhance communication within circuit and advance cooperation among different units. Two meetings may be convened each year. People in charge of the units would share progress of their work, their difficulties, and their future plans. If there is common needs within the circuit that demand collaborative efforts or even joint functions, the Circuit may take up the responsibility as

coordinator. Even recreational activities will help cultivate inter-personal and intra-organizational relationships. However, it is not recommended that Circuits would arrange routine functions just to demonstrate their worthiness.

III. Conclusion

The description of the proposed new organization structure of the MCHK not only presented the structure, but also illustrated some changes in the organizational processes including the decision-making process. Several recommendations for the improvement of the relationships between Conference and local churches were mentioned in the presentation of structural change.

The different recommendations could be boiled down into several guidelines for consideration:

1. The management must decide which level of authority performs the actual function of decision-making and offers that level an appropriate authority to make decision. So authority and responsibility must come together.
2. For any effective discussion, the size of meeting must not be too large. A suggested upper limit is 14-16 members.
3. There should be a formal and clear reporting relationships between the operational units and the higher levels of authority.
4. There must be some trade-offs. If decentralization is desired, involvement of senior management personnel in all levels of authority must be carefully designed and whenever possible, reduced. Authority must be vested to lower levels wherever possible.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONSULTATION PROCESS

PHASE 9

(9) Feedback to Client

I. Introduction

Upon completion of diagnosis, recommendations were given by the consultant and reported to the management. Like the first feedback cycle, the report was shared with the Strategic Development Committee instead of the Executives' Meeting. Due to the complementary nature of the Committee and the consultation, this arrangement was considered more appropriate. Besides, only two members of the Executives' Meeting were not members of the Strategic Development Committee.

II. Feedback to Client (Phase 9)

A. The Feedback Meeting

Before the meeting, a written report of ten pages was distributed to members of Executives' Meeting and Strategic Development Committee. The report summarized the diagnostic results and the recommendations with specific examples. A brief overview of one page highlighting the major points was attached.

By providing the report, it was expected that Committee members would be able to go through and verify the information beforehand.

In the meeting, the consultant did not give a detailed presentation on the findings. Instead a brief introduction was given concerning the purpose of the meeting. The Committee members were asked to give their opinions and work with the suggestions provided by the consultant in

order to develop their own solutions.

Point by point the members went through the report and asked the consultant to make clarification on some areas. The group worked together to decide how to make use of the recommendations. In some cases the group came up with solutions different from those suggested by the consultant. Also the group started to consider how to put the solutions into action. Finally a schedule was designed to finalize the solutions and submit suggestions to the Conference via the Standing Committee.

The feedback meeting fulfilled its function in helping the management group to work on the findings and develop alternative solutions that the management could identify with. Moreover, it was essential that the solutions generated would be put into action plans to be implemented in the near future.

B. Feedback from Organization Members

In response to the suggestions provided by the consultant, the management accepted many suggestions but they also made some changes and developed alternative solutions.

First, they agreed that reporting relationships for the local churches was obscure but they suggested enhancing the responsibility of circuit/parish superintendents instead of the Missions Committee to coordinate and assist local church development. More circuits/parishes would be set up to facilitate communication within the constituency. Representatives from each local church would be limited to two members including one pastoral worker and one lay members.

Second, they claimed that the Ministerial Session would be responsible for supervision of pastoral workers and that the setting up of a Ministerial Committee was not appropriate because pastoral workers

have to be governed directly by the Ministerial Session instead of the Standing Committee.

Third, the Committee agreed that committees handling human resources matters could be grouped together except that Local Preachers Committee would remain an independent unit. Some even suggested that the Stationing Committee can be canceled and discussion of stationing matters would go directly to the Standing Committee. This is because of the sensitive nature of stationing which made it difficult to reduce the number of representatives from local churches in the committee.

Fourth, the Committee agreed that participation of *ex-officio* members in committee meetings can be made flexible. But they preferred retaining the positions in the committee while allowing members flexible attendance. This preserved the right of the members to attend the meetings if necessary.

Fifth, the Committee disagreed that parish workers can be allowed to join the central decision-making process. They maintained that parish workers were employed by local churches and in many cases were "outsiders", i.e. not MCHK members but merely employed workers. So it would be inappropriate to let them participate in the central decision-making mechanism.

There were other areas that consensus was not reached. These included, among others, the status of the Executive Secretary and the Executives' Meeting, and how decision-making authority could be passed from Conference to lower levels of management. Follow-up meetings were scheduled for further discussion and action planning.

III. Conclusion and Recommendations

The consultation process reported in this work was completed by this stage although the management of the MCHK would continue the

discussion, planning, and implementation. The consultant would assist the organization in the future if asked by the management. But the purpose of this project was already achieved by completing the nine phases of consultation.

With the active involvement of the management in designing the solutions and actions, it is expected that the changes would be implemented. As the MCHK proceeds to implement the changes, the management has to take note to the following aspects in order to make the changes work effectively.

First, a steering committee can be set up (possibly upon recommendation of the Standing Committee) as an extension of the management to enact the changes. Its responsibilities mainly include 1) translating the recommendations and solutions into specific actions and procedures, 2) coordinating, managing, and directing the diverse implementation activities, and 3) evaluating the progress of change in different stages. It is important that top management of the MCHK has to take an active role in all phases of implementation. They need to support and promote the new designs because both pastoral workers and lay members look to the top management to determine the importance of the changes. So the steering committee must be led and supported by members of top management team.

Second, the Constitution requires that amendments and alterations affecting the Constitution and structure of MCHK must be approved by the Conference in two consecutive years. So the steering committee can decide and design the changes and apply for approval of the Representative Sessions via the Standing Committee. Officially, some of the changes (e.g. legitimization and cancellation of management layers and committees) may not be able to take effect in this year or even the coming year but detail design and procedures can be prepared and

instituted. Non-structural changes may be implemented this year. So the steering committee has to prioritize and plan for the steps and procedures.

It is essential that not only technical aspects of change are dealt with, psychological and political aspects should also be addressed (Burke, 1987). The third area to be noted is that the Steering Committee must communicate the changes and the core concepts and rationale underlying these changes first to the pastoral workers and representatives, and then to lay members of local churches. The committee must help people understand the substance of change, the necessity of change and the involvement of individual members and operation units in the change process. Dialogue and feedback are also important to help organization members raise questions, discuss their concerns, and solicit new ideas to implement and apply the changes to their respective units. Communication activities may include meetings organized for pastoral workers and local church representatives at conference level, and divisional meetings for operating units. Periodic meetings and progress reports are indispensable such that ambiguity, anxiety, and skepticism may be minimized.

Fourth, to make the implementation process successful, it is essential to orient the mentality of both workers and lay members of local churches towards the new ways of organizing and managing church functions such as committee and decision-making process. The communication activities stated above are useful in motivating the change but more importantly, training and education is needed to model the new behavior pattern. As it is not easy to change the attitudes of people (including the management and lay members) it would be beneficial to invite an outside body or a consultant to conduct some training sessions. The management team as leader of the church must demonstrate that

they are committed to the changes and they are practicing the new way of doing things in the church. So training must first be delivered to the management team including key pastoral workers and lay representatives. For example, unless the management and the leadership demonstrate that they are now devoting more time in ministering and caring instead of running activities, the organization can hardly move towards this culture.

Also, the MCHK may consider organizing some special programme to boost the implementation actions, to create a momentum, and to cultivate a new way of thinking and doing things around. In addition, ongoing and public recognition of achievement by different units or members facilitates the function of reinforcement and lays the foundation for further changes.

Fifth, during the transition process, the steering committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the progress and identifying places where changes are too slow, too fast, or in wrong direction. Apart from regular assessment, it is suggested that the management has to evaluate the overall progress after a certain period and report to all units involved. For example, after two and half year (six months after second approval of the Conference) a comprehensive evaluation may be conducted to assess the effectiveness of implementation and detect possible deficiencies for further correction.

Last of all, the structural changes of the system must complement with an appropriate human system in order to effect optimal performance of the organization. It is suggested that the MCHK has to review her human resources management and recruitment practice and principles (discussed and suggested in Chapter Four) as soon as possible because a successful turnaround cannot be accomplished unless these trouble spots are tackled.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

The present consultation was based on an organization development perspective and utilized action research model as methodology and approach for consultation. Two data feedback cycles were processed. Several problems areas were identified and solutions were generated to improve the effectiveness of the organization.

The consultation was started with initiation of the management team that invited the consultant to conduct the organizational diagnosis. The commitment and involvement of management in the project facilitated the smooth process of consultation.

The first data feedback cycle surfaced six problem areas for further investigation. The management decided that matters concerning human resources were not to be touched on for the time being. Therefore, the second data feedback cycle was concentrated on diagnosing the organization structure, the reporting relationships, and the decision-making process. A series of recommendations were generated including the reorganization of committee structure, circuits, and the reporting relationships, the formalization of the Executives' Meeting, and the principles of meeting composition. The recommendations were well accepted by the management and based on the core concepts underlying the recommendations, alternatives solutions were also generated from the management. The consultation process was considered successful in this respect.

Several recommendations were also given concerning the implementation of changes and the transition process. Of particular importance is the human aspects of the organization. Although the diagnosis and recommendations referred mainly to the structural aspects, the changes would inevitably affect the individuals working within the organization. How organization members relate to each other and how they do their work in the organization are both affected by the changes. Being a service organization, human resources including pastoral workers (service providers) and lay members (service recipients) are significant to the success of the organization. So, the sooner the better, the MCHK must tackle her human system including recruitment, human resources management, and team building in order to sustain the desirable performance of the organization.

Even if the MCHK is able to implement all the recommendations and change actions, the organization should not be satisfied with the status quo. The present consultation serves as a learning process for the MCHK to alert herself to the continuous changes in the environment and to react and adapt to future challenges timely and appropriately. In face of the complex and fast changing environment, continuous improvement will be characteristic of an effective organization.

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